

ESSAYS AND ADDRESSES ON LITERATURE

BY

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LONDON

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE present volume of essays and addresses on literary subjects by the late J. G. Robertson offers only a selection from the ample material available. But it is hoped that the addresses here reprinted may represent, in some degree at least, the wide range of interests and the comprehensive knowledge which were characteristic of his scholarship. While larger works, published in his lifetime or now being prepared for publication, embody the results of life-long research in specific fields, occasional papers such as these are the distilled essence of scholarly experience. To write of men and movements in a European perspective, to evoke a literary panorama with a phrase, is the privilege only of those who take learning for their province with imagination as their guide.

No attempt has been made to arrange the material of this volume in chronological order. But a natural order suggested itself to some extent; and the essays in German and Scandinavian literature may in one sense be regarded as *prolegomena* to the *Addresses on Literature* in the final section, which give expression to the academic creed of a "literary cosmopolitan".

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John George Robertson, born January 18th, 1867. Educated Glasgow University, M.A., 1886; B.Sc., 1889; Leipzig University, Ph.D., 1892. Lecturer in English (subsequently Professor Extraordinarius), Strassburg University, 1896-1903; Professor of German Language and Literature, University of London, 1903-1933; Director of Scandinavian Studies, University College, London, 1924-1933; Editor of *Modern Language Review*, 1905-1933; Chairman of Council, English Goethe Society, 1923-1930, President, 1930-1933; President of Modern Humanities Research Association, 1924-1925; Hon. Litt.D., Manchester, 1928; Hon.Litt.D., Dublin, 1928; F.R.S.L.; F.B.A.; Order of the Star of the North of Sweden; Order of St Olaf of Norway; Medal *Für Kunst und Wissenschaft*. Died May 28th, 1933.

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THE RECONCILIATION OF CLASSIC AND ROMANTIC

THE choice of title for the present address is open to that anticipatory criticism which a lecturer should avoid. You may have inferred from it that I am going to show you that a reconciliation between Classic and Romantic has been attained, or is, at least, attainable—in which case I do not doubt that you have come to listen to me in the armour of scepticism ; or, on the other hand, you may think that I am merely going to revive a stale and tedious controversy which was threshed out and disposed of generations ago, and has, moreover, ceased to have any reality in the art and literature of Europe—and in this case I may have to reckon with your indifference. Let me say at once, that what I propose to do is to examine again the old antagonism in the light of recent research and theory ; and in doing so, I may perhaps be able to show you that it was never quite so real as the champions on both sides used to believe it to be ; indeed, that it was often merely due to looking at the things of the imagination from opposite sides. My ultimate object is to try to discover how the great literary movement of a hundred years ago may be reconstructed and reinterpreted in a more synthetic and harmonious spirit than it has been by the literary historians of the past. This, if it could be achieved, would, I think you will admit, be a step forward.

In their fullness of scientific strength—or shall we say their intellectual arrogance?—the critics of the nineteenth century revelled in classification ; they were in their element in setting up categories and establishing

boundaries, in inventing formulas. The scientific method, the historical method, and all the other methods invaded the domain of the imagination, and imposed upon its phenomena the rigidity of scientific processes. The nineteenth century embarked with terrible seriousness on the adventure of history-writing; and it left us with all our literatures neatly arranged, and grouped and pigeon-holed. The authors of every country were sifted out and put together in "schools"; and I doubt not that some of these authors, were they able to come back to earth again, would rub their eyes in wonder at the strange bedfellows with whom they had been associated. The creation of order is, of course, a necessary step in the study of spiritual, no less than of material phenomena; but the mistake of the nineteenth century, as I see it, was to believe that, once the labels were attached, the task was accomplished. In reality, the consequence of this classificatory zeal has been that that century has handed on to us, together with its industriously amassed facts, many misleading deductions and prejudices, which it must be the business of our modern time fundamentally to reconsider. Our new literary historians have, indeed, a formidable task, to undo the web which has been so assiduously woven by their predecessors. Above all things, we have to emancipate ourselves from the tyranny of the formula; and in particular, I think the time has come when we might attempt to revise our conceptions of one of the most persistent and potent formulas of all, that of the great dualism in aesthetics which is labelled "Classic and Romantic". We have to ask ourselves frankly, what are the actual facts on which this dualism rests. Is the antithesis a real one, or rather—for I do not wish to imply that there is none—is the dualism as deep-seated as we have hitherto believed it to be? Are Classicism and Romanticism entirely irreconcilable?

I may say at once that the problem has been brought home to me with peculiar force by a personal

experience. About a year ago, I published a volume¹ in which I endeavoured to establish the thesis that the conception of the imagination as the dominating factor in artistic creation—a doctrine on which, it is agreed, is based the Romantic revolt of Western Europe against the Classic ideologists—was essentially and in its effective form of Italian provenance; that the initiative may be traced to a remarkable group of Italian critics of the early Settecento, who are little known to modern students outside Italy. These men, goaded to retaliation by the arrogance of the French “ancients” in the great “Querelle des anciens et des modernes”, and the obloquy they had poured on the poets of Italy, propounded theories which cut across the traditional aesthetics of Italy, and forced them into the service of the “moderns”. Almost simultaneously with my book there appeared in Italy a volume by that distinguished scholar, Professor Giuseppe Toffanin of Messina, to whose stimulating work, *La Fine dell’ Umanesimo*, we all already owed a debt. And in his new work Professor Toffanin traversed almost the same ground as myself. His book, however, bore the significant title, *L’Eredità del Rinascimento in Arcadia*²; in other words, those very writers, who, I had shown, had given the stimulus to one of the cardinal tenets of the Romantic doctrine—and that not merely in Italy, but in a particularly significant degree, in Germany and Spain, as well as with some reverberation in France and possibly England—critics in whom I had found the beginnings of classical disruption, Professor Toffanin placed before us as the heirs of the classic spirit of the Italian Renaissance. And I believe, after a careful study of Professor Toffanin’s work, that we are both justified. But in this very conclusion lies surely a ground for re-examining anxiously the traditional antinomy of “Classic” and “Romantic”, for

¹ *Studies in the Genesis of Romantic Theory in the Eighteenth Century* Cambridge, 1923.

² Bologna, 1923.

considering whether there do not, after all, lie in the dual character of this initial phase of European Romanticism factors which minimize and discount much of the acute antagonism that developed in the later time. Such an examination has, in fact, tended to show me how unsubstantial are certain antagonisms which we have long taken on trust; and how different the antithesis sometimes is from that which was so readily accepted by our predecessors.

It is not easy to be brief; for the problems involved are large and complicated. It would require much time to deal with them adequately, and to explore all their possible consequences. I can only to-day ask your permission to adumbrate a few aspects of the matter, as they have presented themselves to me.

To speak of differences implies, of course, definitions. But I am not going to be tempted to enter on the thorny path of trying to define either Classicism or Romanticism.¹ The leader of the first Romantic School in Germany, Friedrich Schlegel, is said to have compiled a volume of considerable size, the theme of which was the definition of Romanticism; and in 1824 we find a French Romantic writer, Émile Deschamps, wearily sighing that, even at that early date, so many people had defined Romanticism. A hundred years ago Romanticism could not be defined; and we have not arrived at a satisfactory definition yet. In point of fact, I do not think that a precise definition, even if it were attainable, would matter very essentially. In recent years a large number of books have appeared in England and America, as well as on the Continent, dealing with the nature of Romanticism²; for the most part, they have warily fought shy of definition, but they have all, more or less, helped us to understand

¹ Cp. Paul Kaufman, "Defining Romanticism; A Survey and a Program", in *Modern Language Notes*, XL, 1925, pp. 193 ff. and the literature there passed in review. I trust that Mr Kaufman's article is the forerunner of a larger study, of which it appears to hold out the promise.

² I have dealt with some of these in a short article, "New Interpretations of Romanticism", in *Discovery*, I, 1920, pp. 332 ff.

what the vital and germinative elements of the Romantic movement were. This is better than a definition, for a definition is, after all, apt to be little more than another formula.

Let us probe the traditional antithesis of Classic and Romantic. I have begun by speaking of Romanticism ; let me keep to it for the present ; for, obviously, if we understand what the one term stands for, the meaning of the other may be deducible from it. The phenomena known as Romantic are amoebic and elusive ; any definition we like to form has to be so much tinkered to meet divergences from our norm that it soon ceases to be a workable definition at all. Moreover, Romanticism means one thing in one land, another in another. With ourselves it is a very wide, intangible thing, perhaps only a kind of negative of Classicism ; the word Classicism having always, indeed, been associated with a more definite creed in our minds. We frankly regard Shakespeare as a Romanticist, Scott as a Romanticist ; but we like also to speak of the great poetry of the Middle Ages as Romantic. Turning to Germany, we find another, and much more restricted use of the term ; here the word Romantic is applied to a phase of German poetry virtually bounded by the close of the eighteenth century and the French Revolution of July 1830. At the same time, it should be noted that, in the many recent studies of the period that have appeared in Germany,¹ there is a growing feeling that to restrict the use of the word so narrowly is impracticable and sterile. The consanguinity—if I may use the word—of the Rousseau-inspired “ Sturm und Drang ”, the analogue of a great deal of our English Romanticism, and the Romantic School in Germany has to be more fully recognized than has been customary in the past. In France the “ École romantique ” has, admittedly, little more than the name in common with the German

¹ I note as especially wide in its scope, G. Stefansky, *Das Wesen der deutschen Romantik*, Stuttgart, 1923.

school; and not very many years ago, an Italian writer, bewildered by the confusion, plaintively questioned whether such a thing as Romanticism existed at all in Italy. Confronted by such very wide differences of connotation, we have to admit that a satisfying European definition of Romanticism is impossible. Every land has its own Romanticism.

There is another aspect of the question which should not be lost sight of in this connection: the antithesis of Classic and Romantic was, in large measure, obscure to the ages that were definitely Classic or Romantic. They were sensible of antagonisms; but they were far from clear as to their nature or the consequences involved. Even the German Romantic School, as compact an embodiment of Romantic doctrine as may well be found, never thought of itself as a Romantic School in opposition to the great master of German Classicism, Goethe. In fact, the designation Romantic was applied, as a term of derision, by later critics to the first German school—a label invented by remote observers—after it had ceased to exist as a school.¹

Let us now look for a moment at the problem from the other side. The literature of the Renaissance we regard as a classic manifestation; but in its early stages, that literature, even if it imitated the ancients, was not a classic phenomenon at all. Judged by the criteria of later Romanticism, it was surely essentially Romantic. It was an energetic, individualistic revolt against the dead hand of the Middle Ages, in spirit exactly parallel to the revolts of the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century. Look again at the pioneers of the great age—the greatest age—of Classicism in modern Europe, the French seventeenth century. The initiators of that brilliant

¹ Cp. F. Schultz, "‘Romantik’ und ‘Romantisch’ als literarhistorische Terminologien und Begriffsbildungen", in *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, II, 1924, pp. 349 ff. Also A. O. Lovejoy, "On the Meaning of ‘Romantic’ in Early German Romanticism", in *Modern Language Notes*, XXXI, 1916, pp. 385 ff., XXXII, 1917, pp. 65 ff.

age were men who insisted that literature must return to nature and reality—a demand which, again, corresponds to that made by the heralds of every Romantic age. The movement of the seventeenth century is, in its inception at least, quite as Romantic as that of 1828. In fact, I think we might generalize, and say that the spirit and principles which actuate literary reformers and revolutionaries at all periods of new-birth, are fairly identical, whether the resultant literature be what we are pleased to call Classic or Romantic. New dynasties arise in poetry when the reigning dynasty has succumbed to tradition and convention, and has thereby brought its age to stagnation and petrification. A new generation rises up in revolt; and this younger generation, whether it be classically minded or romantically minded, invariably inscribes upon its banner a return to truth and nature.

It was, I think, Madame de Staël who first gave general currency to a view of European literature which has influenced all subsequent theorizing on the subject of Classic and Romantic. She set up in her work, *De la Littérature*, published in 1800,¹ the antithesis of “littératures du midi” and “littératures du nord”, the first group descending, in her view, from Homer, the second from Ossian. “The differentiating features”, she said, “of these two kinds of literature are due to two absolutely distinct forms of imagination, as seen in the inventing of incidents and in the faculty of feeling and depicting nature.” The literatures of the north are dominated by “a dreamy and profound sensitiveness”, by that melancholy which is so fruitful in works of genius. “The peoples of the north are less occupied with pleasure than suffering, and their imagination is, on that account, the more productive.” The Christian religion maintains the bond between north and south. “The dogmas of

¹ *De la Littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales, Œuvres complètes*, Paris, 1820-21, IV, pp. 188 ff., 285 ff.

the Christian faith, and the exalted spirit of its first votaries favoured and controlled the passionate melancholy of the inhabitants of a misty clime ; while the peoples of the south, who were susceptible to the contemplative life, adopted a form of religion which was in accordance with their climate and their tastes."

In her contrast of north and south Madame de Staël is clearly describing aspects which reappear in the traditional distinction between Classic and Romantic as applied to literature. It will not, of course, be questioned that literatures dominated by Classic ideals flourish best among the Latin peoples, while Romanticism is a healthier and more natural growth amongst the Germanic and Celtic races of the north. Madame de Staël finds the explanation of the difference—she is, in fact, building on those ideas of the influence of climate, which Montesquieu derived from Italy—not in racial peculiarities, but in the conditions of existence. There have been, however, advocates of the view that the distinction between the Classic and Romantic type of mind is a matter of race. There were writers—and not merely German writers—in the pre-war days, who ascribed all that could conceivably be described as Romantic in the literatures of the south to an infusion of Teuton blood. And in England in the nineteenth century we had our Celtic enthusiasts, who pointed to the Celts as the true originators of the Romantic element in our poetry.¹ It seems to me, however, that all attempts to establish theories of racial psychology in modern Europe are doomed to failure, in view of the complete and repeated mingling of the European races. Indeed, I observe that some of the leading Celtic scholars of our time go so far as to claim the present inhabitants of northern France as more Germanic than the Germans, while the Germans,

¹ It need hardly be added that to Madame de Staël, as to the eighteenth century generally, there was a complete confusion of Celt and Teuton. Ossian was not regarded as a Celt, but rather as a Teutonic bard.

they say, are, to a large extent, a Celtic race.¹ The northern tribes that spread over Italy at the disruption of the Roman Empire soon, as a matter of fact, ceased to be Germans or Celts; they became good South Europeans, as completely as the child of foreign parents, born and brought up in England, becomes in most cases indistinguishably an English child. And have we not seen the people of the American continent moulding themselves into an ethnological unit of the Anglo-Saxon type in spite of their most extraordinarily heterogeneous origins?

But are we really to accept Madame de Staël's distinctions? To begin with, her discrimination between the literatures of north and south has no application to the pre-Renaissance period. Mediaeval literature is not divisible into north and south according to the lines which she has laid down. The mediaeval poetry of France is quite as northern, or, if we will, "Romantic", as that of Germany or Iceland. And is not the great literature of Spain, even in post-Renaissance times, predominantly Romantic and un-Classic? Cervantes is a great Romantic writer, so are Calderón and Lope. Again, by all the accepted criteria of Romanticism, Dante and Ariosto and Tasso are surely Romantic poets. In a little book on Schiller, published many years ago, I dwelt on the comparative failure of Schiller to create a specifically national type of tragedy as being due to his apostasy from Germanic ideals; to his too ready acceptance of the dramatic dogma of France and especially of Voltaire.² But in this particular, I admit now that my argument needs considerable modification. At the same time Schiller *is* a Classic and not a Romantic poet; and so is Goethe in his maturity. Thus the two greatest poets of the wholly un-Latin literature of

¹ Cp. D'Arbois de Jubainville, *Les Celtes depuis les temps les plus anciens*, Paris, 1904, p. xi.

² *Schiller after a Century*, Edinburgh, 1905. Cp. B. Croce, "Poesia germanica e poesia latina", in *Problemi di Estetica*, Bari, 1910, pp. 458 ff.

Germany repudiated the Romantic conception of poetry ; they even regarded it with a certain hostility. Again, there is hardly a Latin land where we find a more wholehearted acceptance of literary Classicism than in Sweden in her Gustavian age. Thus, to regard Classicism as essentially a prerogative of the Latin races, and Romanticism of the northern races, is not possible.

At the same time there are arguments on the other side which are not to be too lightly dismissed. There were, for instance, certain obvious reasons why the canons of Classicism should have been less acceptable to the peoples of the north than to those of the south. Individualism—and Romanticism is individualism—was fostered, especially in earlier times, in the north, because the conditions of life there led to greater isolation ; existence was a harder struggle with nature, and in consequence a soberer thing than to the Mediterranean peoples ; and this brought with it a tendency to introspection and seriousness. The supernaturalism of the Latin dwellers in the sun is, in particular, more of a daylight thing than the awe-inspiring personal mysticism of the dark, misty north. The comparison of the ghost in Voltaire's *Sémiramis* with the ghost of Hamlet's father is not merely to be used, as Lessing uses it, as an illustration of Voltaire's incompetence.

A complete solution of our problem, that will silence all doubters, is clearly not to be reached by approaching it only from the Romantic side. Let us turn to the other side : it may be that the crux of the problem lies not so much in the definition of Romantic, as of what we understand by Classic. Here, it seems to me, we must first disabuse our minds of the old rough-and-ready identification of Classic with antiquity. That, in fact, was a fallacy initiated by the theorists of the Renaissance, and stereotyped by the classicists of the seventeenth century. The literature of Greece is, in point of fact, no more

"Classic" than our own Elizabethan literature; the *Odyssey* is quite as Romantic as the *Orlando Furioso* or the *Nibelungenlied*. The essential criterion of Classicism may, I think, be narrowed down to dependence on the Latin ideals of a definite age. The Romans built up their literature on Greek models, that is to say, on an alien literature, which, viewed from a wide distance of time, appeared to them divorced from the realism of life. They thought that its apparent apartness from life was a definite aesthetic principle of the Greeks; they did not realize that their inference was merely due to their own defective knowledge of the life which the literature reflected; to their own inability to understand the essential realism of Greek literature. Now, the men of the Renaissance were at a similar disadvantage. At the Renaissance we have over again the case of a people suddenly confronted by the superior excellence of an art which was far removed from them in time. As they were ignorant of the life-basis of that literature, the conspicuous feature to them of the antique, whether Greek or Latin, was not its reflection of life, but what they regarded as its idealization of life; and to this quality they attributed its perfection. Thus the spiritual essence of Classicism in literature is not imitation of the ancients, although this may be its outward form; but the avoidance of the immediate poetic expression of an experience. This theory was embodied in the classic "Poetics", and passed over into the southern literatures, which were naturally the first to respond to the stimulus of the Renaissance. A truly classic poetry was, then, a poetry that ignored the trivialities of individual experience, and dealt only accidentally, or not at all, with the particular emotional problems of the individual; a literature that was divorced from the actual facts of life.

Now, if this reasoning is accepted, it is obvious that much of our antithesis between Classic and Romantic does not rest on any deep-seated psychological

incompatibility at all, but is due to an accident in the development of European letters. We might even go so far as to say that the European peoples, one and all—in so far as they are not committed to an extraneous and artificial aesthetic principle, such as the imitation of the ancients—that these peoples naturally and invariably express themselves romantically.

A more significant ground of distinction between Classic and Romantic—and one of which we have heard much in recent years—lies in the essential difference between the mysticisms of the north and the south, to which I have just alluded. This is not so easily brushed aside as a mere accident of development; we come here upon something that affects more fundamentally the psychology of race than do mere aesthetic theories. I cannot help thinking that the most suggestive and furthering contribution to our problem is the recent investigation in Germany of the nature of northern mysticism and its expression in Gothic art; in particular, I would instance a stimulating book by the art-historian, Wilhelm Worringer, on the “form-problems” of Gothic.¹ In earlier days Gothic was regarded as the most characteristic expression of the northern, Romantic mind—think, for instance, of Goethe’s enthusiasm for the Strassburg minster—it was the absolute antipode of Classic, Germanism rampant. Now, Worringer does not present Gothic to us as an exclusively Germanic phenomenon. “The Teutons”, he says, “were not the sole creators of Gothic. The disposition towards Gothic is to be found wherever Germanic blood mingles with that of other races; Celts and Latins had an important share in its development. But the presence of the Germanic element is the essential factor.” It seems to me that this is a very significant conclusion: “Celts and Latins had an important share in its development.” In other words, Gothic, which

¹ W. Worringer, *Formprobleme der Gotik*, Munich, 1911; I quote from the 12th edition, 1920. Cp. also K. Scheffler, *Der Geist der Gotik*, Leipzig, 1917.

we have always regarded as an essentially Romantic manifestation, is not the artistic expression of one particular race ; the Germanic strain in the people of northern France could not, unaided, have produced their magnificent monuments of this art, any more than the Germans themselves, or we in England could have done. Gothic is a product of race-mingling, or, at least, of race-fertilization. Complementary to this investigation into the nature of Gothic are the equally valuable studies, initiated by Heinrich Wölfflin, nearly forty years ago,¹ on the meaning and character of the Baroque. But into this side of the question I cannot within the scope of the present address attempt to enter. I think, however, that the line of reasoning pursued by Worringer and these other writers might be carried further. Are we not justified in saying that all new phenomena in art and poetry are essentially and normally the result of fertilization from without ? That, among peoples, and in the matters of the human spirit, new vigour and new developments are the consequence of the mingling of races ? And that inbreeding is as fatal to spiritual health and progress, as it is to the physical propagation of living things ? It seems to me that all Romantic manifestations—whether they be of the north or the south ; whether the Romanticism of the Middle Ages, the Romanticism of Gothic, the poetry of Dante, of Calderón, of Shakespeare, or of the beginning of the nineteenth century—are, in their ultimate elements, products of inter-racial fertilization. The efflorescence of northern poetry in Iceland was almost certainly due to the mingling of Celt and Teuton in that remote island ; Nadler's significant claim for Königsberg and Silesia as the focuses of the Romantic mysticism of Germany² may point to the mingling of Germanic and Slavonic blood as the decisive factor

¹ H. Wölfflin, *Renaissance und Barock*, Munich, 1888 ; and especially his *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, Munich, 1915. Cp. H. Cysarz, *Deutsche Barockdichtung*, Leipzig, 1924.

² J. Nadler, *Die Berliner Romantik*, Berlin, 1921.

there ; and who will say that Moorish influence had not some share in creating the great literature of Spain ? Still clearer is it that the pre-Romanticism of the eighteenth century, and the Romanticism of every literature of Europe in the nineteenth were essentially products of complex cosmopolitan, race-mingling forces. On the other hand, Classicism is nurtured, or, at least, let us say, not hampered, by inbreeding and by the absence of extraneous fertilizing elements.

Let me turn now to another, again a stimulating German work, that appeared some three years ago, the study by Fritz Strich on German Classicism and Romanticism.¹ Strich is only concerned with the German problem, but I think his ideas are capable of wider application. He sees in the antithesis of Classic and Romantic a deep-seated polarity of the human spirit, which finds its expression in two aesthetic ideals : the quest for perfection, unity, completion ; and the striving after the ever-changing and never attained realization of the perfect symbol. The one type of mind aims at rounded-off achievement, the other at infinite development towards a never realized perfection. Thus Classicism is realistic and static ; Romanticism idealistic and progressive. The symbol of Classic art is the musical phrase, complete in itself, or the self-contained perfection of classical architecture ; the symbol of Romantic art is the endless melody, or the aspiring, never completed lines of the Gothic cathedral. The Classic poet strives, in Goethe's winged word, " dem Augenblick Dauer zu verleihen ", to make the moment eternal—" Verweile doch, du bist so schön ! " The endeavour of Classicism is to create a world for itself outside time. In the Classic world there is no longing and no memory ; only a present—a present that strives to make itself eternal. Classicism builds upon reason, expresses satisfaction, optimism, joy. The Romantic poet, on the other

¹ F. Strich, *Deutsche Klassik und Romantik, oder Vollendung und Unendlichkeit, ein Vergleich*, Munich, 1922 ; 2nd ed. 1924.

hand, endeavours to give infinity and eternity to the static phenomena of experience. Romanticism is nurtured by emotion and borne into the empyrean by the imagination; it is inspired by eternal longings that penetrate back through all time, and forward into eternity; it dwells on the transiency of things, on pain and death. The Classicists symbolized their faith in the gods of Olympos: Greek gods dwelling in an unchanging, timeless world¹; the world of the Romanticists is one of eternal becoming, and change, and death.

I venture to think that no one has so ably synthesized the trend of modern thought, and its endeavours to penetrate the inner meaning of the great aesthetic dualism as Strich does here. Beside this penetration, all the older attempts at discrimination between Classic and Romantic fall away, as being concerned merely with the superficial and the inessential. To associate Romanticism with antagonism to the great literatures of antiquity is, of course, absurd; for the most fervid worshippers of the classic world and classic poetry, in Germany as with ourselves, were pure-blooded Romantic poets; while the whole Middle Ages looked to Vergil—the supremely classic Vergil—as a kind of incarnation of the Romantic spirit. Equally inessential is a definition based on the Protestant character of modern Classicism and the Catholic tendency of modern Romanticism—at best, indeed, this is only applicable to German literature; the reverse might be proved elsewhere. Again, our favourite English definition, that Romanticism means the revival of a love for the Middle Ages and a renaissance of wonder, is mainly a deduction from the English phenomena, and little more than a distinction of the surface. In so far as such distinctions have any real substance, they are but interpretations of a deeper antinomy of the spirit, an antinomy which in the ancient world was

¹ Cp. F. Strich, *Die Mythologie in der deutschen Literatur*, Halle, 1910, and my Taylorian lecture, *The Gods of Greece in German Poetry*, Oxford, 1924.

symbolized by the Classic Apollo and the Romantic Dionysos.

If we are to accept Strich's conception of the antithesis, what are the prospects of bridging the gap, of a reconciliation of Classic and Romantic? There are two ways in which such things are accomplished: one—and the rarer way—by the discovery of a key, a formula, that reconciles the incompatibilities; the other, by a gradual evolution of thought, which softens the asperities, reduces to fleeting shadows what formerly seemed hard and fast obstacles, and proves the barriers to have been no real barriers at all. The progress of aesthetic thinking in the last half century has, I believe, pointed out the latter as the way towards some reconciliation of an antagonism that was once so acute.

Literature itself in the past hundred years has steadily contributed to the confusion of the Classic-Romantic issue, and has led to the destruction of many of its antagonistic elements. In the land where the antagonism was sharpest, in Germany, it is to be seen conspicuously in the post-Romantic age. In Germany neither Classicism nor Romanticism attained its goal. Classicism, even in the supreme genius of Goethe, never achieved the ideal of perfect, self-contained completeness; never succeeded in letting us forget the unfathomable, unsatisfiable mysticism of the human soul. Death it could not eliminate, and death involved the *πάντα ῥεῖ*, the passing of all things, spiritual as well as physical. Even Euphorion, the child of Faust and Helena, the spirit of poesy, must die. On the other hand, the intense yearning of the Romantic spirit equally failed to realize the infinity and eternity of its symbol. The post-Romantic age shows the consequences of these failures: we see the Romantic spirit vainly seeking for new sources of vitality; trying to bolster up its slipping faith with the Romantic poetry of the East; strengthening its emotional side by a new patriotism. And on the other

side, we find Classicism hardening itself into mere disciplined imitation of the perfect achievement of the past. But into the efforts of both comes a new disrupting element that plays havoc with them—or, may we say, provides a conciliatory basis for both?—the clamorous demands of the Time-spirit, of Life, as the supreme reality to all mortals. Time invades the timelessness of the classic ideal; and Time destroys the timeless eternity of the Romantic dream. Poetry was invaded and permeated by this Time-spirit in the nineteenth century, as it never had been before; and History, that surest ally of the Time-spirit—History, which the classicist would fain eliminate, and which the romanticist endeavoured to harness to his service—becomes the dominant factor in the aesthetic mentality of the new time; and again, a reconciling factor. Thus the post-Romantic generation of poets is a conciliatory generation: Hebbel, if not the greatest, the deepest and perhaps the most clear-seeing of them all, is not classic and not romantic; for him the old antithesis has ceased to have any meaning.

And as the nineteenth century progressed, new problems forced themselves to the front, which cut across the old demarcation. The realism of forty years ago was a very different thing from that realism which formed a corner-stone of the old classic structure, and a fundamental tenet of its faith. In fact, this new realism was, in its inception, really a Romantic idea: Gustave Flaubert, as we now recognize, was a great Romanticist; and idealism, once the watch-word of Romanticism, becomes the watch-word of its antithesis, Classicism. Here more than a reconciliation has been effected; there is a complete turn-about-face. The champions of the old Classicism and Romanticism, moreover, suddenly find themselves in the same camp, united in the endeavour to stem the encroachments of a vapid, poetry-less age, to keep poetry from being enslaved in the service of a mechanical, scientific conception of the world; in fighting

shoulder to shoulder against a literature that is the reflection not of the ideal and of all time, but only of the fleeting moment. Classicism and Romanticism were thus alike impugned in their dearest convictions. On the practical side, the antithesis, as it existed a hundred years ago, has ceased to be valid.

And on the theoretical side? Here the movement towards effacing the old distinctions is even more pronounced. Hegel, romantically inspired as he was, was, in the aesthetic field, nothing if not a conciliator of Classic and Romantic; a great wizard of syntheses. And although Schopenhauer may have helped the old Romanticism to prolong its life deep into the nineteenth century, by imbuing it with a pessimism that was essentially Romantic, yet with him, too, the antagonism of Classic and Romantic was blunted. In the philosophic movement of our own time the antinomy has no place; Classicism and Romanticism have ceased to be material aesthetic conceptions at all.

From the very first, Romanticism held out the hand of fellowship to Classicism; Romanticism was essentially a movement of conciliation in all domains of the spirit; conciliation was inherent in its universalism. To it poetry was conterminous with life, not, as to Classicism, a thing apart from life. It aimed quite frankly at finding a common meeting-ground for the past and the present, for East and West; for the Classic ideal and the Modern. In its very freedom from constricting fetters and disciplining processes, in its unlimited power to penetrate past and future, to seek the universal and the eternal, there lay from the first an occasion for conciliation. And in the after-time, the movement towards such a conciliation of antagonistic aesthetic ideals largely went out from romantically unshackled minds. They sought to understand, and by understanding, to discover a basis for harmony.

It is possible that a polarity so deep as that between Classic and Romantic can never be wholly reconciled; it

may be always with us as a kind of spiritual brand upon our race. The antithesis of Classic and Romantic may remain ; but it is subject, as all things, to change ; and change eliminates asperities. Certainly the old polarity that was so acute a hundred years ago, has disappeared ; the old antagonism has ceased to be actual ; and we are in a position to-day to synthesize the literature and aesthetic thought of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as, I think, never before. The basis of that synthesis and reconciliation is to be attained, it seems to me, by a deeper penetration into the spiritual depths of the great eighteenth century, from which our conceptions of Classic and Romantic have sprung. We have to go back behind the sharp distinctions which the nineteenth century imposed on the spiritual life of its early years, to understand that, at bottom, the two opposing forces spring from a common matrix, from that wonderful conception of Humanity, which is the most precious of all the heritages that have come down to us from the eighteenth century. In the last few years, in France, in Germany, in Sweden, there has been an intensified study of that phase which the French call the “*Pré-romantisme*”, and in such study, it seems to me, lies the surest way to a deeper and truer conception of the phenomena I have been discussing. I believe that in the earnest endeavour to understand and demonstrate the synthesis of Classic and Romantic, not in the analytic spirit of the nineteenth century, its dwelling on antagonisms and conflicts, and marking off of schools, is the way of progress. After all, literature, art, is a living, organic thing, a thing of infinite subtleties ; its phenomena cannot be confined within watertight compartments ; rather are they to be compared with dissolving views. There are no hard and fast boundary lines in literary history. Nor is the individual soul to be dogmatically labelled Classic or Romantic, or anything else ; indeed, most sensitive souls go through a series of moultings, in which they

are Romantic and Classic by turns. The great poets of the world are all both Classic and Romantic. They are Romantic in their youth, when the spirit is elastic, and the future seems boundless in its possibilities ; Classic in their maturer years, when the circle of their activity has been mapped out and closed ; when they realize that " in der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister ". The Goethe of *Werther* also wrote *Iphigenie* and *Hermann und Dorothea* ; and again the Goethe of *Hermann* is also the author of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* and *Der westöstliche Divan*. Well, indeed, might he repudiate the attempts of his contemporaries to brand him either Classic or Romantic. Thus, Goethe stands for the harmonious synthesis we must endeavour to achieve : and for all of us moderns he is " il maestro di color che sanno ".

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

IT has been said that there are two epochs in the history of modern Europe when the whole continent thought and felt as one people : one of these was the age of the Crusades, the other the eighteenth century. These are pre-eminently the epochs of literary cosmopolitanism. The knight of the Cross embodied the conciliation of the World and the Church in which the earlier Middle Ages had seen only irreconcilable and incompatible powers ; he provided a new spiritual ideal for the higher poetry, not of one class or nation only, but of all Europe ; and the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre was an end that all Christendom had at heart. The European literature of the age of chivalry was one in spirit.

Less simple is the cosmopolitanism of the later epoch : for literature, by the eighteenth century, had become an infinitely more complicated thing ; in spite of the common basis of mutual sympathy and understanding, the harmony of this later cosmopolitanism is less evident. In no Romance land is the eighteenth century regarded as a period of real brilliancy. To the French it presented, in its " classical " aspect, what was too obviously an anticlimax to the great achievement of the seventeenth century ; and even the stimulus that came from men like Rousseau and Diderot in the second half of the century, appeared only as negative and destructive, as a foreboding of the political revolution. Thus the positive significance of the new doctrines did not show itself until the old régime had been swept away. In Italy, too, the eighteenth century, inspired as it was by a healthy

revolt against the secentistic disintegration of renaissance ideals in the preceding age, hardly satisfied a nation that could look back on the literary giants from Dante to Tasso. And in Spain the period is unequivocally depressing. With ourselves the eighteenth century has had many devoted lovers : but it has not received full justice from the cosmopolitan point of view ; it has rarely been presented as an age in which England contributed to European letters the dynamic ideas which ushered in the new time. Our historians have been too easily satisfied to record the insufficiency of our English classicism, and the absence—within the eighteenth century, at least—of outstanding positive achievement in the movement we call romantic. We are not reminded as often as we should be, that the England of this age looms much larger as a literary power in the continental perspective, than when viewed from a purely national standpoint.

In contrast to these literatures, that of Germany in the eighteenth century is distinctly exhilarating ; and this in spite of the fact that the general mass of her literary production is in no wise superior—rather, indeed, inferior—to that of England and France. When the eighteenth century opened, the state of German literature was so despicable that hardly a critic in Europe thought it worth mentioning ; and it closed with Goethe and Schiller enthroned in Weimar as leaders of literary Europe. What was even more significant, the century ended by giving birth to that specifically modern individualism which was to stamp the whole nineteenth century in European literature as romantic. There is something miraculous in this astoundingly rapid development of German eighteenth century literature. Indeed, the chequered literary history of Germany is full of surprises of this kind ; I doubt whether a parallel could be found to it elsewhere, unless it be in the not unsimilar outburst of German mediaeval poetry at the end of the twelfth century. My object here is to

attempt some kind of explanation of this phenomenon of sudden and apparently unjustified development in German poetry.¹

Before scrutinizing the possible causes of the phenomenon, it would be well to be clear in the matter of dates. Literary movements rarely adapt themselves to the calendar: and the eighteenth century is notoriously difficult to fit into dates approximating to 1700 and 1800. When, from the point of view of literature, may the century be said to begin? Our own literary historians are inclined to go back to the year of the Restoration: and in France the difficulty of finding a real boundary-line between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—cutting across the interminable “*Querelle des anciens et des modernes*”—is well-nigh insuperable. In Germany, dates have been chosen as far apart as 1648, the Peace of Westphalia, and 1740, the date of the Leipzig-Zürich controversy; and there are valid arguments in favour of both. Germany's spiritual convalescence after the depletion and exhaustion of the Thirty Years' War is obviously a starting-point for her great age; on the other hand, if we wish to keep to facts and real achievement, nothing that Germany produced before 1748, that is, before the century was half over, is of any consequence for her subsequent achievement. I think, however, an event can be found which might well be adopted as a boundary-date, not merely for Germany, but for Europe as a whole, an event which definitely gave the century its cosmopolitan stamp. This is the Revocation by Louis XIV of the Edict of Nantes, on October 22nd, 1685.

By this decree the tolerant privileges which had been accorded to the French Protestants for a century were withdrawn: the Huguenots, who represented in many ways the flower of the French intellect, were

¹ I have here attempted a fuller presentation of ideas which I first put forward tentatively in my little book, *The Literature of Germany* (Home University Library), London, 1913.

banished from French soil. They fled to Holland, to England, to Germany, where, mostly from necessity, they turned to their pens in order to gain a livelihood. They set up printing presses in Holland, produced learned and literary reviews, translated and commented industriously on the life and letters of the new communities amongst which they were cast. They wrote in their own French tongue, which had then, as never before or since, universal currency in Europe: they made the thought and literature with which they came into contact a common European possession; on the other hand, they brought French ideas and standards, French literature, to every capital in Europe. The Revocation of the Edict was thus a main factor in making the eighteenth century what it became, a century of enlightened cosmopolitanism. And the first significant effect of this cosmopolitanism was the introduction of English ideas and English literature to the continent: in the translation of these exiles, books like the *Spectator* and *Robinson Crusoe* became familiar household friends in every country.

If the year 1685 is regarded as an acceptable starting-point for the eighteenth century, can an equally appropriate date be found for its close? Here again, the various nations are far from unanimity; on the whole, the great Revolution seems to be most in favour as a culmination and close of the epoch. But the Revolution is less of a literary factor—even in France—than is popularly supposed; and in no Germanic literature, including our own, has it what might be called dating significance at all. I have selected the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes as the beginning of the literary movement of the eighteenth century, on the ground that this struck the keynote of its cosmopolitanism. Proceeding on the same lines, a better date in the neighbourhood of 1800 could not be found to mark the close of the old epoch, and the beginning of the new, than the birth of the German Romantic School in 1798; for the nineteenth century

in every literature of Europe is a century of Romantic individualism. From the German school, largely through the mediation of Madame de Staël, the Romantic ideas spread to every land in Europe and set the stamp of romanticism on the whole nineteenth century.

The eighteenth century in European literature I thus regard as the epoch bounded by the years 1685 and 1798. My concern is more particularly, however, with the literatures north of the Alps, and with the only one—apart from Sweden—that really matters in this century, that of Germany. In no literature is the Janus-like aspect of the eighteenth century so clearly marked as here : this literature looks on the one hand backward to the Golden Age of classic perfection, spurring its great poets on to the masterpieces of the close of the century, and, on the other, it looks forward into the mystic depths of modern romanticism ; and nowhere, except perhaps in Sweden, is the balance of this dualism more equally held than in German poetry. In another essay I have already touched briefly on the relation of Latin classicism to the literatures of the north. This relation will, however, bear closer examination, for, if I am not mistaken, it affords a valuable key to the inner significance of the German eighteenth century. Since the great northern initiative of the Middle Ages, or, at least, since the militant assertion of the middle class spirit in the sixteenth century, the Germanic literatures had, as we have seen, fallen meekly back into the train of the literatures of the south : they even show a faint reflex of the ebb and flow of the Renaissance movement of Latin literatures. Germany's Opitzian school, for instance, is the analogue of the French movement associated with the *Pléiade* ; and, as in the southern literatures the healthy development of Renaissance ideals was followed by the degeneration known to the various lands affected by it as *secentism*, *gongorism*, *préciosité*—with ourselves as *euphuism*—the German

Renaissance was followed by the degenerate and uninspired extravagance, the "Schwulst" or bombast, of Lohenstein and Hofmannswaldau. Dark as these imitative ages were in the literatures of the north, they were not without germs of independence: the pride of the bourgeoisie, which, under the wing of the Reformation, had risen almost to arrogance in the sixteenth century, and had not been stifled even by the devastation of the Thirty Years' War, soon began to reassert itself. It is to be seen in the successful imitation of the picaresque novel, which gave Germany one of her great books in the seventeenth century, the *Simplicissimus* of Grimmelshausen; it appears in the strong undercurrent of mysticism and pietism from which sprang, in spite of the fetters of classicism, a great religious poetry; even in Sweden, where this classicism had a particularly strong hold, it was early undermined, as Lamm has shown in a recent enlightening book,¹ by a mysticism which reached a strange culmination in the spiritualism of Swedenborg, about the middle of the eighteenth century.

By the end of the seventeenth century Germany possessed a literature which was a very feeble replica of that of the French seventeenth century; the so-called "court poets" and the redoubtable Gottsched, with his dream of an "Académie allemande" in Leipzig, were the spokesmen of this German pseudo-classicism. This movement was reinforced by the utilitarian philosophy of the "Aufklärung", or rationalism, as formulated by Christian Wolff. The practical consequence of this philosophy was to lull men's minds into a sense of content and security, to convince them of the rightness of the world, and the impossibility of improving upon it; it thus found itself better served by an orderly "classical" literature than by one which permitted of departures from the established norm. This naturally made for stagnation

¹ Martin Lamm, *Upplysningstidens Romantik. Den mystiskt sentimentala strömningen i svensk litteratur*, Stockholm, 1918-20.

rather than progress, and the century was nearly half over before any conspicuous signs of development are to be discerned. Then, as we have seen, by a kind of miracle, German literature advanced in leaps and bounds to a culmination with the great poet who was born when the promise of better things had only just begun to show itself.

How is this miracle of literary growth to be explained? There is, it seems to me, only one answer: Germany rose to greatness by borrowing from her neighbours, by assimilating their ideas; she was the daw in peacock's feathers. The intellectual conditions of the country cannot justify any other explanation: for anything more provincial in thought and feeling than the Germans of the eighteenth century, more narrow in outlook, it would be difficult to conceive. Even the rise of Prussia to political importance under Frederick the Great found, owing to the alien intellectual sympathies of the king, a comparatively insignificant echo in Prussian literature. One is inclined to wonder sometimes how so unpromising a provinciality could have provided the matrix from which a Goethe or a Schiller sprang; nor was the provinciality easily, or ever, eradicated: it left its traces on Germany's poetry at the very zenith of her achievement.

What happened was that the Germans, schooled first in the conception of "taste" embodied in French classicism, were quick to develop any feature that promised a relaxation of its unwelcome stringency: they were alert to grasp the new liberating ideas brought from England by the *Spectator*, and later by the Richardsonian novel, Thomson, the tragedy of common life, Young, Ossian and the Percy ballads. Germany devoured this new literature—as a natural consequence of her previous starvation diet—far more greedily than France, digested it more quickly, and reproduced it in a surprisingly unimitative literature. Eighteenth-century Germany, or at least,

her leading intellectuals, were cosmopolitans who took their good where they found it, whether from France, or England, or Italy : and having appropriated it, put upon it a stamp at once national and individual. Hermann Hettner, in his evergreen history of the eighteenth century, quotes from Goethe an illuminating comparison of the history of knowledge to a great musical fugue. The literature of the epoch, he points out, is just such a fugue, of which each new development marks an increase in richness and volume. England was the first to give out the melody : France then took it up where England broke off : and ultimately the leading voice passed to Germany. And, as in a rightly constructed fugue, all this development was carried out in perfect harmony with the basic key, and each voice was harmoniously merged in the other. Thus in a fuller sense than of other ages, we may speak of the European symphony of literature in the eighteenth century.

What now is the precise nature of this process of assimilation in German eighteenth-century literature ? Professor Kuno Francke, in his stimulating history of German literature, published more than a quarter of a century ago under the title *Social Forces in German Literature : A Study in the History of Civilization*, propounded a suggestive hypothesis : he saw in the German movement "a continual struggle between individualistic and collectivistic tendencies, between man and society, between personality and tradition, between liberty and unity, between cosmopolitanism and nationality—a struggle which may be said to be the prime motive power of all human progress."¹ That an oscillation there is, has been palpable, since Francke's lucid presentation, to all English and American readers ; but I have never felt satisfied that his association of the literary movement with the social movement provides the right key. That

¹ K. Francke : *Social Forces in German Literature*, New York, 1896 (Introduction) p. 3.

a great national literature is intimately bound up with a nation's social life is a commonplace; but the peculiar thing about German literature in several of its most significant phases is that it is an extraordinarily unsocial literature: it does not, democratically, hold the mirror up to its people. This, as we shall see later, is even more definitely true of the great literature of Weimar. Thus, retaining Francke's hypothesis of oscillation, I would narrow it down by eliminating the social element, and restricting it to aesthetic ideas, that is, to the expression of the artistic sense in literature.

I would see the movement of the eighteenth century symbolized in a great pendulum which swings from one extreme of classicism, itself a collectivistic conception of art, to the other of individualism. Starting from a classicism which differs but little from that formulated by Boileau, Germany reaches her first turning-point in the conflict between Gottsched, the representative of classicism, and Bodmer and Breitinger in Switzerland; this was her "quarrel of the ancients and the moderns", and it was of mercifully short duration. The victory of the Swiss "moderns" resulted in a swing of the pendulum to individualism, which takes the form of the exuberant lyricism of Klopstock. But, hardly arrived at this point, the pendulum moves back again, to mark, with the neo-classicism of Lessing, another stage in the development of the classic "idea". Lessing's classicism was very far indeed from being a repetition of Gottsched's. For while Gottsched had been content to accept as his masters the great Frenchmen of the seventeenth century, Lessing would have none of them: on his banner he inscribed, with his great comrade in arms, Winckelmann, the legend "Back to the Greeks!" For the old pseudo-classicism there was substituted in Germany and, thanks to the preternaturally clear-sighted genius of Lessing, with far less ambiguity and far wider sympathy than in any other

literature, a real classicism. But years before Lessing's life closed, the German pendulum was once more at the other extreme: the "Back to the Greeks" classicism had given place, with disconcerting suddenness, to an outburst of individualism, the most uncompromising and militant of all, the "Sturm und Drang". The impulse had come partly from the new English middle-class literature—and Lessing himself, as the author of *Miss Sara Sampson* and *Emilia Galotti*, and as the champion of Shakespeare, had been largely responsible for directing German attention to the "unclassic" excellences of English literature—but in a higher degree it had come from France, from Rousseau. Thus while the genius of Germany's greatest poets was being matured, her literature was ruthlessly individualistic: they were, indeed, themselves the leaders of the "Sturm und Drang"; German literature was at war with law and order. And then, led by these poets, who had come through the purifying fires of this fierce individualism, German poetry swung back again. With this third phase of eighteenth-century classicism, inaugurated by Goethe's *Iphigenie auf Tauris* and Schiller's *Don Carlos*, Germany rose to the highest level of positive achievement which her literature ever reached. The new poetry by no means lost sight of Lessing's insistence on the Hellenic ideal; but it was not Lessing's ideal: it was modified by a legacy from the intervening phase of individualism, the spirit of humanity, or, to use the word which the Germans used and which seems to carry with it a peculiar eighteenth century flavour, "Humanität". The classicism of Weimar is above all things a humane classicism. In so far, it has no precise analogue in other lands; it is, one might even say, the culmination of the entire movement of classical evolution which had first set in with the Renaissance. Even this was not the end. The eighteenth century had hardly reached its close: Goethe and Schiller were still at the zenith of their

powers, when the pendulum swung back once more. With the birth of the Romantic School in the year 1798 Germany embarked yet again on a period of individualism, the most fruitful of any for the literature of Europe.

All this oscillating movement was accompanied by a rapid development ; the pendulum, so to speak, never returned to the same place. A better image to illustrate the movement of the century might, indeed, have been that of a spiral staircase : the procession of ideas ascends, and as it ascends it finds itself at one moment at the classical side of the staircase, at another at the individual side ; each time it returns to one side or the other it finds itself, so to speak, higher up : and it has attained this higher position by passing in the interval to the opposite side. Take, for instance, the three classic phases : they represent a steady advance of the classic "idea" from the false classic through the true, to the new humane classicism, in which, for the first time, the ideals of Christian ethics are completely fused with the aesthetic ideals of antiquity. Further, classicism could not go : nor did it try to go. When, in the nineteenth century, Germany, having exhausted her romanticism, let her pendulum swing again, the new extreme it touched was rather social and political—classicism is, as we have seen, primarily a manifestation of the social idea—as represented by the literature of "Young Germany". In the same way, progress is to be observed on the other side : the first vague, undefined protest in Switzerland against the pseudo-classic fetters, which made way for the lyricism of Klopstock, was superseded, in the second individualistic phase, by the defiance of all rules and moderation in the "Sturm und Drang". Rousseau, as we have seen, was the force behind this movement ; but the individualism of Rousseau and that of the Germans were separated by a wide gulf. Rousseau was essentially a practical genius, practical as no German could be. While German poets dreamt

spacious dreams of human freedom, Rousseau sat down and wrote his definite and concrete *Contrat social*; they lost themselves in the infinite and the sublime, gave themselves up to wild passions and immortal longings, while Rousseau, again with his mind on quite matter-of-fact things, produced the greatest love story of the eighteenth century. In the supreme practical question of the age of enlightenment, that of education, it was, again, not the Germans but the Frenchman who brought the new ideas to a focus in his *Émile*. Finally, there is the attitude of man to his own life. The German individualists found no solution to the riddle of existence: life was to them a distraught thing, a thing of discords; they never learned to see life—their own lives—whole. Once more, it was the practically minded Rousseau who grasped the real problem, and gave the world one of its three greatest autobiographies, *Les Confessions*.

German "Sturm und Drang" was essentially a militant, destructive, negative movement: it destroyed the old ethic and aesthetic world without thought of setting up anything in its place. It was a revolt of the new generation against the old, against the tyranny of the self-sufficient "Aufklärung", which still held Europe in its ban: it subverted the old patriarchal family life and the moral ideas on which that life was reared. The favourite theme of these young writers was the breaking-up of the home, reflected in the conflict between father and son, or, more frequently, as in the German "tragedy of common life", between father and daughter: the desire of the young for a freer life, for more room for self-expression and self-development.¹ "Sturm und Drang" is, as I have said, the most conspicuously youthful literary movement in the literature of the

¹ Cp. A. Köster, *Die allgemeinen Tendenzen der Geniebewegung im 18 Jahrhundert*, Leipzig, 1912 (reprinted in *Die deutsche Literatur der Aufklärungszeit*, Heidelberg, 1925, pp. 237 ff).

world : it is youth triumphant. But it was careless of the future, and this indifference was in large measure its undoing ; for it led to its being rapidly superseded by the soberer, law-governed collectivism of Goethe and Schiller in their maturity. The classicism of these poets is a more conciliatory classicism for the very reason that they had passed their youth, and begun their career, in an epoch of fierce individualism ; they preserved from that epoch its world-embracing humanity, its note of sympathy with individual aspiration and suffering. And thanks to the schooling in this new classicism, individualism, when it again asserted itself in German literature as Romanticism, was imbued with a deeper sense of social responsibility. Where “*Sturm und Drang*” was content to destroy, Romanticism strove to build up : where the earlier movement was negative, the later one was positive. This explains its deeper hold, not merely on the German, but on the European mind, and its longer, more beneficent reign.

Wherein consists the greatness of eighteenth-century achievement in Germany ? What was Germany’s contribution to the stock of European ideas ? Before trying to answer these questions, it would be well to consider what exactly is meant by achievement. We like to speak of the end of the eighteenth century as a “*Blütezeit*”, a period of flourishing in German literature ; but does this mean any more than that in Goethe and Schiller Germany possessed two supremely great poets ? If we stop to think what the age would have been, had there been no Goethe and Schiller, we are obliged to admit that the level of German poetic achievement without them is not very different from that of the rest of Europe. A gulf separates the two leaders from the rank and file of German writers : not only did the latter lag a long way behind ; in many cases they did not even pass through Weimar classicism at all, but remained faithful to the old individualistic ideals, to adapt them later, quite unclassically, in

accordance with the positive postulates of the romanticists. Nor had Goethe and Schiller their people behind them when they turned their backs on "Sturm und Drang" individualism and produced the classic masterpieces of their mature years; they were essentially aristocrats of the spirit, without democratic backing. There is a deeper significance than is usually recognized behind the lack of sympathy, the frictions and the controversies under which both poets suffered, although, being ensconced in the safe seclusion of Weimar, they could afford to make light of them. The educating of the German people to their ideal of classic humanism was a long and laborious process, and one that remained—perhaps necessarily remained—incomplete.

Kant expressed a great truth when he said that his age was not an age of enlightenment, but one of growing enlightenment. This idea might be put in more comprehensive form by saying that the eighteenth century is a steady evolution of the idea of human freedom, an evolution to which each of the great nations contributed its quota. England's share is the political expansion and emancipation of the middle class, and this is the dominating note of English eighteenth-century literature. It was brought about, not merely by the far-seeing liberalism of English constitutional government, but also by the rise of new forces by industrialism and colonization, both of which made strides in England undreamt-of elsewhere. Can one wonder that English eighteenth-century literature is essentially practical and real, filled with a sense of national responsibility to which every unit of the nation responded? Turning to France's literature, we find here, too, a great emancipatory idea; but it is more restricted to theory: its expression is intellectual rather than practical. Before the great Revolution, practical political thinking, such as was a commonplace of English life, was debarred, or merely academic and futile. The reformatory effort

of French literature was thus towards spiritual and intellectual freedom; what England had achieved practically, France had still to fight for behind the barricades of the Revolution. When we turn to Germany, we find her at a still greater disadvantage; for the rise of the middle class to influence and power, as in England, was there only a dream, and not even that; and the spiritual freedom, freedom of thought, which France had asserted, was regarded as unholy daring by the Luther-bound descendants of the race that had once produced Luther.¹ Germany was not even a nation: but merely a congeries of little states, bound loosely together by a shadowy union which rejoiced in the grandiloquent title of the "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation". The people were ground under a despotism no less real because it was benevolently exercised by a crowd of princelets, each of whom aspired to make his court a miniature Versailles. The Germans of the eighteenth century were not a political people, nor had they any temptation to become one; their literature is guiltless of political thought—perhaps the single exception is Wieland, but even in his case the political sense only awakened late in life. The great German poets had no pride of nation; they were untrammelled by patriotic motives, and wrote, not as Germans in the first instance, but as Europeans. Thus, finding no resonant public life around them, no response to that struggle for spiritual emancipation which, with envious eyes, they watched being fought out in France, they turned their thoughts inward.

The German literature of the eighteenth century is paramountly concerned with the individual; the problems that it handles are problems of the one and not the many; its practical aim is to remove the

¹ Cp. some suggestive pages in V. Hehn's *Über Goethe's Hermann und Dorothea*, Stuttgart, 1893, pp. 29 ff. "Das achtzehnte Jahrhundert", he says, "war in England industriell, in Frankreich emanzipativ, in Deutschland ästhetisch."

fetters which hinder the flight of the soul, to confer upon man spiritual freedom. The teaching of Goethe and Schiller, of Kant and Fichte, is none the less precious because it ignores material fetters ; for in its very limitation it showed men how they could free themselves from the tyranny of forces inimical to growth and progress. It taught them to educate their wills into spontaneous harmony with their desires. And how was this new spiritual freedom to be achieved ? By means of an education in beauty. That was, for them, the sacred function of art in the evolution of humanity. What Lessing had begun in his little work on *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts*, Schiller completed, in the spirit of Weimar classicism, in his *Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*, one of the most significant books of its age and literature.

It has been pointed out that the French men of letters who fought for freedom were thrown into the Bastille, whereas their German contemporaries lived at peace with the political powers. And why ? Because the Germans were satisfied—making possibly a virtue out of necessity—to exalt, not outward political freedom, but emancipation of soul. The typical hero of German poetry does not meet his end fighting heroically against fearful odds : his heroism is renunciation, his achievement a harmonious reconciliation with the outside, hostile world, and with the eternal moral law. Thus while, in eighteenth century France, freedom was won in blood at the Revolution : while in England it was peaceably covenanted in the House of Commons : in Germany it was fought out in the soul of every individual man and woman—or rather not fought out at all, but attuned in harmony with the social and moral forces by means of the gospel of beauty. This is what the Germans meant by “aesthetic education”. And to me it seems the most precious of their contributions to the spiritual life of modern Europe.

The German literature of the eighteenth century is a literature which takes no count of a public ; indeed it has no public in a collective, social sense. The Germans of that age had no unique centre where the heart-beat of the nation's life could be felt : Vienna, the only city that could claim a hereditary right to be the London or Paris of the German-speaking world, was ostracized on account of political developments and the great religious schism ; even racially it was at no time entitled to play a representative rôle. As for the North German towns, they were little better than provincial market-towns. This in itself, and quite apart from any instinctive characteristic of the northern temperament, prevented German literature from being a social phenomenon ; it militated, in particular, against the development of the drama ; it encouraged provincialism—in its essence a kind of individualism ; but this defect turned out in reality to be a virtue and a source of strength : for it gave Germany's literature its peculiar mission in the European commonwealth of letters. In no literature of the eighteenth century is the individual soul so faithfully reflected as it is in German poetry ; no literature faces the problems of the individual life with such earnestness and such insight ; none can offer such help and consolation to the seeker after truth who has lost his way in the mazes of life, or to the shipwrecked voyager buffeted by a sea of spiritual troubles. This is what makes Goethe's *Faust* the deepest poem of the individual life in modern literature, the never-failing consolation of all who have "eaten their bread with sorrow and spent long nights in tears", the breviary of a new faith in the essential goodness of the world.

All the greater German literature of its age shares in this quality of *Faust* ; indeed, this poem is a kind of microcosm of the epoch spanned by its creator's life. Stendhal once compared the novelist to a man passing along the highway of life bearing a mirror :

Faust is such a mirror of the spiritual life of Goethe's age. Here is "Storm and Stress" with its burning problems of the individual life: its crass conflicts with the ethics of the rationalistic age: here we see effected that miraculous transition in German letters from ruthless individualism to responsible solidarity. Faust the rampant individualist becomes Faust the type of aspiring humanity; and this new Faust passes through a kaleidoscopic world of allegory, on which all the spiritual and social problems of the age have left their stamp. More than this, Faust, the Teuton of the north, is led back through time to the Greece of Homer; he is wedded to Helen of Troy, a union symbolizing the aspiration of the humane, world-embracing classicism which flowered in Weimar. This poem is not only classic: it is at the same time the embodiment of the new Romanticism, with which the nineteenth century opened; with the union of Faust and Helena the partition between classicism and romanticism goes down: the new individualism is reconciled in altruism with the life of the many. Thus Goethe's *Faust*, rightly read, is an epitome of all that was best and greatest in Germany's supreme age of literary achievement. It is the crown to the long evolution of ideas from Gottsched's Leipzig to Goethe's Weimar, the kind of "divine event" to which—if one may fall back on the teleological interpretation beloved of eighteenth-century thinkers—the spiritual evolution of the century would appear to have been consciously moving.

FRANZ GRILLPARZER

Read the Italian translation of Guido Sorelli of the German Grillparzer—a devil of a name, to be sure, for posterity; but they must learn to pronounce it. With all the allowance for a translation, and, above all, an *Italian* translation . . . the tragedy of *Sappho* is superb and sublime! There is no denying it. The man has done a great thing in writing that play. And *who is he?* I know him not; but ages will. 'Tis a high intellect.

IN these words, written at Ravenna in January 1821, Byron recorded his impression of Austria's greatest poet.¹ It can, however, hardly be said that the unpronounceable name has in these hundred years made the complete conquest of posterity which he prophesied. Outside Austria and Germany, Grillparzer is but little known; the rest of Europe by no means agrees that he is one of the chief dramatic poets of the world. Even in his own land his reputation has stood at no uniform level. In the course of his lifetime Grillparzer passed in his relations to the public through a wide range of experience, from the jubilant reception of his first play to indifference, and from unequivocal rejection to the plaudits of an admiring nation, proud to claim him as their greatest. In

¹ The best introduction to Grillparzer is that by Auguste Ehrhard, *Le Théâtre en Autriche: Franz Grillparzer*, Paris, 1900, more especially in the German version by M. Necker, Munich, 1902. The lectures by E. Reich, *Franz Grillparzers Dramen*, Dresden, 1909, are suggestive; and there is an American work by G. Pollak, *F. Grillparzer and the Austrian Drama*, New York, 1907. The most convenient edition of his works is published by Cotta and edited with an excellent introduction by A. Sauer. The large *édition définitive*, published by the city of Vienna (1909 ff.) has been impeded, but, fortunately, not suspended, by the financial stress of these times.

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reality, Grillparzer suffered more from false recognition than from the lack of recognition. When as a young man of twenty-six he wrote his *Ahnfrau*, he was hailed with acclamation as a poet of the then fashionable school of "Fate dramatists"; and this early popularity had to be atoned for by a life-long misappreciation. He resented being associated with this group of Romantic poets; but to the German-speaking world at large he remained, throughout most of his active career, a "Fate dramatist" who, in that capacity, had not fulfilled expectations. In fact, the Viennese public held it to be a kind of repudiation of their verdict that Grillparzer, in his second drama, should have deserted the path in which they believed his career to lie. The popular success of his first play was never repeated, for Grillparzer never again adapted himself so completely to the taste of the many. The higher he rose, the scantier was the applause which greeted his efforts, until, when the public rejected his one fine comedy, *Wel' dem, der lügt*, he finally gave up the struggle. But before he died—and he reached the age of eighty—he was privileged to bask once more in the sun of popular favour, and to hear himself generally acknowledged as Austria's most important poet.

For some years after Grillparzer's death in 1872, there seemed every probability that his work would lapse into the respectful neglect which is the lot of all but the greatest classics; but before the nineteenth century reached its close, a remarkable change came over the popular estimate of Grillparzer. Not only Austria, but Germany too, seemed to awaken to a sense of the poet's importance. A Grillparzer Society was founded in Vienna in 1889, and still continues to flourish, doing excellent service by the publication of an annual *Jahrbuch*. On the centenary of Grillparzer's birth, in 1891, there was hardly a theatre in the German-speaking world which did not honour his memory by a special performance of one

or other of his dramas: while the larger national theatres gave "cycles" of his works. Indeed, it happened on several occasions that theatres in which some forgotten, dusty play of Grillparzer's had been taken from the archives, in the modest hope of attracting a small public, ready to honour a great name for one evening only, found themselves compelled to repeat the performance many times. All this pointed to a revival of interest in Grillparzer which was something more than merely literary; and it has been emphatically endorsed by the very remarkable popularity of the poet in the last thirty years. Since the lapse of the copyright in Grillparzer's works the number of reprints has been legion; his place as a German classic is clearly assured.

It is interesting to observe that this revival of interest in the Austrian dramatist has been contemporary with a feeling amongst the cultured classes in Germany that Schiller was ceasing to speak to them with a living voice. Not that this implies disparagement of the master of the classical drama: his place on the German Parnassus has remained, and will remain, what it has always been; it was merely felt that Schiller was no longer a poet of the present. The ethical groundwork of modern life is too complex a thing to allow us to find real satisfaction in Schiller's simple creed; a heroism, essentially summed up in the struggle of the will against an untoward fate, is no longer enough to interest us. This is hardly surprising, for since Schiller's day the whole spirit of European thought has changed: Hegel has risen and fallen; the leadership passed first to Feuerbach; then Schopenhauer came into his own, and planted in men's minds the seeds of a deeper scepticism of life-values than they had ever known; and these seeds have borne fruit in our own day in a philosophy that prides itself in having rendered Schopenhauerism as effete as Hegelianism. With these changes in the intellectual outlook of Europe, men have turned to

new leaders, have been attracted by new problems, and sought a new literature to minister to their spiritual needs. Thus to many cultured Germans of the last generation Grillparzer has stood nearer than the Schiller whom they adored in their youth. Whether this poet of pessimism will maintain his position in our century which, in philosophy at least, has begun on so anti-pessimistic a note, remains to be seen ; but so far there seems no waning of Grillparzer's popularity in Germany; and, in my own experience, none of the German dramatists of the nineteenth century finds a warmer welcome from young Anglo-Saxon minds than he.

Lombroso, in his collection of psychological data bearing on the affinity of genius and insanity, seems strangely to have overlooked the example of Grillparzer ; and yet we might search through the history of men of genius and not find a more striking case of the association of high intellectual powers with morbid mental tendencies. All his life long Grillparzer was haunted by the dread of insanity ; it hung like a sword of Damocles above his efforts, blighting his ambitions and plunging him in solitary gloom. Grillparzer's mother was one of the Sonnleithners, a family that has played an important rôle in the musical and theatrical life of Vienna. Marianne Grillparzer inherited not only the quick artistic temperament of the family, but also its lack of mental balance : her nature was finely strung, morbidly sensitive, and she suffered constantly from ill-health. Her husband's position as advocate and lecturer in law at the university was at no time a brilliant one, and was ultimately quite insufficient to keep his wife above the worries of a pinched domestic life. Moreover, he was a reserved, outwardly unsympathetic man, who disliked society, and even held aloof from his own family : the bringing up of the four sons fell for the most part on their mother. Marianne's health, never robust, broke down under the strain,

and in 1819, in a fit of mental aberration, she put an end to her life. But even before this catastrophe, the fatal curse had shown itself in the family : in 1817 Franz's brother Adolf threw himself into the Danube, leaving behind him a terrible testament, a solemn warning to his brother to beware, if he should ever have children, lest they take after him. Karl, the second eldest, was not altogether free from mental derangement, and led a strange, restless life, which ultimately ended in suicide ; while the youngest, Camillo, soon became a prey to religious mania which, in later years, also developed into insanity.

And from such a family sprang Franz Grillparzer, the greatest poet of Austria : his Count von Borotin in *Die Abnfrau* was haunted by no more terrible spectre than the poor poet himself, living in the shadow of a threatening doom. Franz was the eldest son ; he was born on January 15th, 1791, in Vienna, and all his life long remained intimately associated with the city of his birth. No life could have been less eventful. After a desultory education, mainly at the hands of incompetent tutors, he studied law at the university between 1807 and 1811. In 1813 he entered the service of the state, and he remained in that service, even after he became famous as a poet. Subsequently he rose to the responsible position of Director of the Imperial Archives. The even course of his life was little broken : a journey to Italy in 1819, after his mother's death ; another to Germany in 1826 ; one to France and England in 1836 ; and lastly, one to Greece in 1843, were the principal outward events. Grillparzer's life was uniformly lacking in exhilarating moments. He suffered, like so many of his contemporaries, from the mere fact of being an Austrian, and doubly so, as he was an official in the government service : a padlock was upon his lips. To the man of letters in the first half of the nineteenth century Vienna—the Vienna of Metternich

—with its literary censorship and jealous, lynx-eyed officials, was a veritable prison-house. Every original idea, every fresh literary development, however apparently innocent and unconnected with politics, was suspect. Grillparzer was neither a man of action nor a fighter, still less was he born to be a reformer ; his moody temperament made him seek to avoid difficulties rather than to face them. He suffered in silence, and through long suffering, hate and bitterness took the place in his soul that might have been filled with love and sympathy. Even when, in the last years of his life, his countrymen brought him the laurel wreath, it gave him little pleasure : the honours that were showered upon him seemed only to point the irony of a life that had miscarried.

Thus Grillparzer's biography is essentially tragic ; it is the story of a man from whom recognition was withheld until it was too late : when it came, it was even unwelcome to him. A poet lacking in self-confidence, he was without the courage to resolve his life into a deed. One cannot help comparing him in this respect with his great contemporary, Richard Wagner, who was nothing if not a fighter: as in 1849 he had fought for political freedom in the revolution, so he fought for his art until his last breath. Grillparzer was under no greater necessity to remain a loyal burgher of Vienna than Wagner to remain a Saxon ; still less need he have spent his life as a government servant ; but he was unable to assert his freedom. He could only find vent for his dissatisfaction in epigram and satire ; the power to act seems to have been denied him. Here lay the "tragedy of the will" in Grillparzer's life, a tragedy which, in some form or other, is reflected in all his poetry. It is not surprising to learn that he had few friends and lived a solitary life ; nor did he ever marry. Again, it was the fatal lack of will, of the power to make a decision, to master fate, instead of cavilling at it, that was responsible. In 1821 he met Katharina Fröhlich, his "ewige

Braut", as she has been called, then in her twenty-first year. Her brilliant talent and musical genius at once captivated the poet, and they were betrothed; but they never married. It may have been that they were not really suited to each other: Katti was passionately self-assertive, and prone to jealousy; and Grillparzer had little patience with contradiction. In 1823 the marriage was actually arranged, the furniture bought for their home, when a new quarrel scattered their plans to the winds. And so the relationship went on, oscillating between quarrels and reconciliation—a state of things not adapted to restore Grillparzer's troubled mind in these years to peace and equanimity; and in 1830 the final breach would seem to have taken place. Yet Grillparzer remained faithful to his Katti all his life, and in his old age he found a home under the roof of herself and her two sisters. Katti, who did not die till 1879, was his sole heir. The entire truth about the relationship between them we shall probably never know, although a little more light—disappointingly little—has been thrown on their intercourse by papers and letters, the seal of which has just been removed in accordance with the poet's will. But there is no doubt that Grillparzer's own unhappy temperament was responsible for most of the misery in his relations to his fiancée.

Unsympathetic to us as Grillparzer's life in many ways is, it was in great measure the abnormality of his nature that made it possible for him to fulfil his poetic mission; the very lack of those qualities which would have endeared him to the biographer, has made him in so peculiar a degree one of the chief dramatic voices of the century. Again, the comparison with Schiller forces itself upon us. Schiller, fighting with the superhuman courage of the early heroes, conquered for himself a foremost place in European letters at the beginning of last century, and created a drama which, like his own life, is one long paean in honour of the heroic deed, the deed of "self-deliverance".

Grillparzer, in the melancholy shadow of a will-less temperament, has given us dramas in which man appears, not as a great-souled fighter overcoming adverse fates, or perishing as the moral victor, but as a tempest-tossed victim, struggling vainly to assert himself, fighting the demons of his own soul. And the reward of the struggle is rarely even a heroic death, only an inglorious yielding to the inevitable. Thus, it is the very absence of heroic, self-assertive genius which gives Grillparzer's poetry its significance, and yet he was richly gifted with that most active of all types of literary talent, the dramatic. He was a born dramatist, a master of the theatre.

At the age of seventeen Grillparzer set to work on an ambitious iambic tragedy, *Blanka von Kastilien*, which is now to be found among his collected works. Although little more than a shadow of Schiller's *Don Karlos*, it is full of the right kind of promise: the dramatic instinct is unmistakable. To the period of his apprenticeship to literature belong two other pieces, *Alfred der Grosse* and *Spartakus*, which, had they been completed, would have been more interesting than *Blanka von Kastilien*; for they reflect Austria's share in the War of Liberation, the struggle against Napoleon. And we must also not forget the fragment of a translation of Calderón's *Life is a Dream*, which is of particular significance as the first fruit of Grillparzer's study of the Spanish drama. Of all literary influences, that of the Spanish poets, Calderón and especially Lope de Vega, left the deepest marks on him, and, in his creative work, was responsible for the purest gold.

With his twenty-sixth year, Grillparzer's "Lehrjahre" came to a close. In January 1817, *Die Ahnfrau* (*The Ancestress*) was produced in Vienna, not with much immediate success, but with a success which, to Grillparzer's disgust, grew from year to year and threatened to overshadow all his later efforts. For *Die Ahnfrau* belongs to that category of decadent

Romantic tragedies, which are known as "Schicksals-tragödien" or "fate-tragedies". The poet himself tried to minimize the resemblance by throwing the blame on Schreyvogel, the director of the theatre; and it has been questioned in later times whether *Die Abnfrau* really is a "fate-tragedy". But this matters little; it was, at least, an achievement to have written the best tragedy of its class. The story is extraordinarily gruesome and little to modern taste; in fact, it has come to be regarded as the kind of play which should only awaken ridicule in healthy minds. But to appreciate it fairly, one must place oneself at the historical standpoint. It was, moreover, written in a few hours of inspiration: it came red-hot from the poet's heart, and the best of it is intimately personal. There is a juvenile lack of firmness in the character-drawing, and frequent redundancy in the dialogue; but there is genuine poetic feeling in the verse, and it is far from being the weak piece of trumpery which Carlyle, echoing contemporary German opinion, would have it to be. Above all, it is in the best sense dramatic: Grillparzer had not chosen Calderón's *Devoción de la Cruz* as one of his models for nothing. In the art of poetry he had still much to learn: in the art of the dramatist almost nothing.

It took Goethe considerably over ten years to pass from the "Storm and Stress" which gave birth to *Götz von Berlichingen* and *Werther*, to the classical tranquillity of *Iphigenie* and *Tasso*; Grillparzer would seem to have leapt across the similar period in his development in the space of a few months. Not long after *Die Abnfrau* was produced, he had completed his *Sappho*. The theme is simplicity itself; the *dramatis personae* number virtually only three, the others being little more than *staffage* in the picture. Phaon's love turns from the ripe womanhood of the great poetess to the childish naïveté of her young slave Melitta; Sappho learns the truth that earthly

happiness is not for one who seeks the immortality of fame : that she who was born to walk with gods cannot descend to the world of ordinary men :—

Wen Götter sich zum Eigentum erlesen,
Geselle sich zu Erdenbürgern nicht,
Der Menschen und der überird'schen Los,
Es mischt sich nimmer in demselben Becher,
Von beiden Welten Eine musst du wählen,
H a s t du gewählt, dann ist kein Rücktritt mehr !
Ein Biss nur in des Ruhmes goldne Frucht,
Proserpinens Granatenkernen gleich,
Reiht dich auf ewig zu den stillen Schatten
Und den Lebendigen gehörs't du nimmer an !¹

She throws herself from the Leucadian rock into the sea. That is all, and yet out of this slight plot an engrossing tragedy is built up ; scene is fitted into scene, act into act, with the sure hand of a master of his craft. It is not surprising that Byron was moved to enthusiasm by the play—and his tribute to Grillparzer is enhanced by the fact that the Italian translation which he read was exceedingly mediocre—for *Sappho* is distinctly Byronic and Madame de Staël-ish, one of the sources of its inspiration being, no doubt, *Corinne*. It is not one of Grillparzer's greater works, however : it is a *tour de force* of dramatic construction, but it shows signs of the haste and the unfavourable conditions under which it was written. Moreover, the gulf that separates it from the *Ahnfrau* is not, on closer scrutiny, so deep as at first appears. The difference is mainly one of setting : *Sappho* plays

¹ I give this passage (Act iii, sc. 2) in the translation of Ellen Frothingham, Boston, 1876, the best of four English versions ;

He whom the gods have chosen for their own
May not consort with citizens of earth :
The mortal lot and heavenly ne'er can mingle
In the same cup ; but thou must choose between them.
Hast thou once chosen, there is no receding :
One taste of the immortal fruit of fame,
Like to Proserpina's pomegranate seeds,
Ranks thee for ever with the quiet shades,
And to the living thou belong'st no more.

in a Greek, a "classic" *milieu*, *Die Abnfrau* is a gruesome romantic phantasmagory. The spiritual worlds of the two plays are not, however, so very far apart; the power of love over the Greek poetess is no less a supernatural, irresistible fate than that which is embodied in the ghostly visitant of the house of Borotin.

Grillparzer's next work, the trilogy of *Das goldene Vliess* (*The Golden Fleece*), is, in every respect, a finer achievement. Begun in the autumn of 1818, it was interrupted by the tragic death of the poet's mother and his journey to Italy, and not finished till the beginning of 1820. The theme, familiar as it was to the European stage in a long series of dramas in every tongue, proved unusually recalcitrant in Grillparzer's hands. He felt it necessary to employ a larger canvas than his predecessors, who had been for the most part content to dramatize the culminating catastrophe in Medea's life. One reason was, no doubt, his own personal interest in the character of Jason, who, he saw, should be made more than a mere foil to Medea; but, with his fine instinct for psychological development, he must also have seen that, to make the terrible catastrophe in Medea's life, the murder of her children, acceptable to a modern audience, it was necessary to show how her mind had become so warped as to render the deed inevitable. Thus *Das goldene Vliess* is designed to unroll the whole history of Medea's life. *Der Gastfreund* (*The Guest-friend*), the one-act prologue, depicts the naïve barbarian child suddenly converted into a woman with a sense of the meaning of guilt: she sees Phryxus, the bearer of the golden fleece, who comes to Colchis seeking the Herakles-like god of his dream, murdered by her father. The second drama, *Die Argonauten* (*The Argonauts*), which, in its romantic melodrama and Spanish effects, shows its kinship with *Die Abnfrau*, describes the wooing of Medea by Jason, the leader of the avenging Argonauts, and Medea's

ultimate consent, wrung from her after a long and subtly developed psychological struggle, to sacrifice her father, home and gods, and betray the Fleece for the love of the Greek. Between *Die Argonauten* and *Medea* lies a long gap of years, years in which Jason has returned in honour to Greece, in which Medea has borne him two children. In spite of Medea's earnest resolve to become a Greek among Greeks, she is met everywhere with distrust; a curse seems to lie upon her, and through her upon her husband. All her early spontaneity is gone; a passive pessimism has eaten into her soul: "What's done ought not to have been done, but done it is." Jason has put all his hopes on Corinth, the home of his childhood; but that very childhood, in the person of the gentle Kreusa, leagues itself in his soul against his barbarian wife. A suspicion of dark crime rests on Medea; the decree of banishment is pronounced against her; even her own offspring turn from her to Kreusa. Thus, abandoned by both husband and children, she conceives the terrible revenge with which every Medea tragedy must culminate. But Grillparzer looks beyond the final catastrophe and brings Jason and Medea once more face to face. Jason is crushed and broken; Medea is not the triumphant fury of ancient tragedy. She, who had always seen her fate darkly, now at last sees clearly: comprehends the tragic guilt and weakness of her husband. She goes back to Delphi to return the fleece to the temple of the god from which it came.

Sag' ich dir Lebewohl, mein Gatte.
 Ein kummervolles Dasein bricht dir an,
 Doch was auch kommen mag: Halt aus!
 Und sei im Tragen stärker als im Handeln. . . .
 Erkennst das Zeichen du, um das du rangst?
 Das dir ein Ruhm war und ein Glück dir schien?
 Was ist der Erde Glück?—Ein Schatten!
 Was ist der Erde Ruhm?—Ein Traum! . . .

Ich scheide nun, leb' wohl, mein Gatte !
 Die wir zum Unglück uns gefunden,
 Im Unglück scheiden wir. Leb' wohl !¹

Grillparzer's trilogy presents an interesting parallel to the great tetralogy of the German stage, Wagner's *Ring des Nibelungen*. Just as in Wagner's poem the pivot of the dramatic action is the gold from which the fatal ring is welded, so in Grillparzer's it is the Golden Fleece. Gold and Fleece are both symbolical of that lust for power which brings upon their possessors the penalty of death ; and both works might with equal right bear as motto the words from Schiller's *Wallenstein* :—

Das eben ist der Fluch der bösen Tat,
 Dass sie, fortzeugend, immer Böses muss gebären.²

Again, as the Nibelung's hoard is guarded by Fafner, so the Fleece is guarded by a dragon in the land of Colchis, and like Siegfried, Jason carries off the coveted treasure, which at the close of both works is returned to its original keeper. Even the Siegfried, Brünnhilde and Guttrune of *Götterdämmerung* have their counterparts in Grillparzer's Jason, Medea and Kreusa. But how different is the attitude of the two poets to their themes ! There is an exhilaration in Wagner's poetry, a sublime heroism in the struggle of love against law and treaty, against eternal Necessity

¹ Act v, sc. 2. In the translation of F. W. Thurstan and S. A. Wittmann, London [1879] :

I bid thee now, my lord, a long farewell !
 A life of sorrow now begins for thee,
 But still, whatever come, be resolute,
 Be stronger in endurance than in acts ! . . .
 Dost recognize what thou didst fight to gain ?
 What seemed thy glory and thy happiness ?
 What is earth's happiness ? A very shadow.
 What is earth's glory ? A mere empty dream !
 Poor fool ! and thou hast dreamed these shadowy dreams !
 The dream is over ; but not so the night.
 I go now ! Fare thee well, my lord and husband !
 As in distress we found each other first,
 So in distress we part now.—Fare thee well !

² ' This is the very curse of the evil deed, that it must continue to create and bring forth evil ! '

itself, which is wholly lacking in the resignation of the Austrian poet's outlook on life. The strength of *Das goldene Vlies* lies rather in its subtle insight into the finer emotions and conflicting temperaments, its intuitive psychological realism: for, in spite of its classic theme, this trilogy is modern in its realism. It is what modern criticism likes to call a tragedy of *milieu*, a conflict between barbarism and Greek culture, emphasized by the very verse in which the characters speak. And in still another sense Grillparzer is essentially of our time: in the personal conflict of his Jason and Medea he has given us, no less than Hebbel in his *Herodes und Mariamne* and Ibsen in his *Doll's House*, a very modern marriage tragedy.

Remembering the rapid transition from *Die Abnfrau* to *Sappho*, the reader will hardly be surprised to learn that when Grillparzer next appeared before the public it was as a historical dramatist. *König Ottokars Glück und Ende* (*King Ottokar's Fortune and End*) is Austria's greatest national drama, as Kleist's *Prinz von Homburg* is Prussia's. I am inclined, however, to see something more in *König Ottokar*: it is the first outstanding European tragedy in which an attempt is made to apply the principles of realism to the dramatization of history. Grillparzer gave himself enormous pains in the study of the historical sources, and he endeavoured to present events as they were, subject to the inevitable dislocations and contractions of chronology involved in bringing a period of seventeen years within the compass of five acts. In the first act, in which Grillparzer shows us King Ottokar of Bohemia at the zenith of his power and fortune, and at the same time foreshadows his coming downfall, he has given us one of his greatest achievements as a poet: I know of no more powerful exposition in the dramatic literature of the nineteenth century. Well might Hebbel—who was not inclined to be very polite to his contemporaries—say: "In face of this act Shakespeare would lift his hat." Perhaps, indeed, its

very brilliancy, its wealth of incident and motive and colour, overshadows unduly the rest of the play ; but the nature of the theme required an un-Aristotelian climax in the first act. Only a reader committed to the conventional view of tragedy can be blind to the power with which Grillparzer through four acts unrolls the declining fortune of the Bohemian king. There are wonderful, unforgettable scenes here, such as the meeting of Ottokar and Rudolf of Hapsburg on the island in the Danube, the scene where Siegfried like an avenging Nemesis demands from Ottokar his father, or that last piteous scene of fallen greatness, where Ottokar throws himself down on the steps of his own palace in Prague :—

Hier will ich sitzen, als mein eigner Pförtner,
Und Schande wehren ab von meinem Haus.¹

I have emphasized Grillparzer's historical realism ; but *König Ottokar* is far from being what realistic historical dramas are apt to become, an antiquarian revival : it has a very real and very intimate relation to the poet's own time. Even had he not himself suggested it, we could hardly fail to see across the drama the shadow of a greater than Ottokar, that of Napoleon. Grillparzer's *König Ottokar* might, indeed, be claimed as the greatest of all German contributions to the literature inspired by Napoleon.

König Ottokars Glück und Ende was produced in the Vienna Burgtheater in February 1825, four years after *Das goldene Vlies*. Two of these years, however, were taken up with a disheartening conflict with the Austrian censorship ; the moment an Austrian poet turned his attention to historical subjects he became an object of suspicion to the Austrian police. Grillparzer's woes as a practical dramatist under such conditions had begun ; he was accustomed to reckon a new period in his life from the production of *König*

¹ " Here will I sit, as my own gatekeeper ; and ward off shame from my house." *König Ottokar* is, in large part, translated in Pollak's book on Grillparzer.

Ottokar. In 1825 he was able to look back on ten comparatively happy years, years of social recognition, friendships, success; he had produced five great plays which had all enjoyed reasonable favour and had made his name respected among his contemporaries. Now began ten very unhappy years; not unproductive years—far from it—but years of trouble, discouragement, conflict with the censor and indifference on the part of the public. A more hopeless, unhappy state of mind than is revealed in Grillparzer's diaries between 1826 and 1832 could hardly be imagined.¹

Here is the source of my torment, the focus of all my life-weariness. The belief that I am not able to create—and in a vague feeling I have the horrible idea that I shall never again be capable of it—pursues me until I feel like a hunted animal. (August 27th, 1826.)²

It almost seems as if the end were near. But I will die sword in hand. Never renounce the thought of being master of myself. Confide in no one! Complain to no one! I will die sword in hand! (1827.)³

The invisible chains clank on hand and foot. I must say farewell to my native land, or for ever give up the hope of occupying a place among the poets of my time. God! God! Has it been made so difficult, then, for everyone to be what he might and ought to be? (March, 1828.)⁴

To such depths did Grillparzer sink in these years. But from this misery sprang his finest lyrics. He has hardly written a song that might tempt a musician to put music to it, but he has crystallized his own sufferings in a handful of poems which give him a place second only to Lenau among the lyric poets of Austria. I think especially of the seventeen wonderful poems that are grouped together as *Tristia ex Ponto* (1825-34); in this cycle is concentrated the whole history of his ten unhappy years. The burden of

¹ Cp. A. Sauer's introduction to the Cotta edition of Grillparzer's works. The *Briefe und Tagebücher* have been published in a collected edition (ed. C. Glossy and A. Sauer), Stuttgart, 1903.

² *Tagebücher II*, in *Werke*, ed. A. Sauer, II, 8. Wien und Leipzig, 1916, p. 230.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 288.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

these verses is melancholy retrospect on happy days that can never return, the vain cry for an inspiration that has deserted him, the bitterness of disappointed hopes, of a love that brings no happiness or peace. Nor do we miss the old "Klage" of the Germanic poets, the last consolation of despair: "Entsagen":

Eins ist, was altergraue Zeiten lehren,
Und lehrt die Sonne, die erst heut getagt:
Des Menschen ew'ges Los, es heisst: Entbehren,
Und kein Genuss, als den du dir versagt.¹

This period of gloom had been ushered in by a visit to Germany in 1826, of which almost the only bright spot was his meeting with Goethe in Weimar; and even that visit did not pass off quite as Grillparzer would have liked. In earlier years Goethe's kindly reception might have been the beginning of a new epoch in the poet's life; now it was little more than an interesting episode. But in Weimar he could at least envy the freedom of literature; compared with this little Saxon capital, his own Vienna seemed still to lie under the ban of mediaeval intolerance.

And yet before Grillparzer's darkest days were over, he had completed a tragedy which stands in the front rank of his work, *Des Meeres und der Liebe Wellen* (*The Waves of the Sea and of Love*, 1831). Grillparzer's dramatization of the Greek story of Hero and Leander is a love-tragedy, as *Romeo and Juliet* and *Tristan und Isolde* are love-tragedies; it is about two lovers and two lovers only. With the same care as he had shown in his *Medea* trilogy, he builds up the spiritual life of Hero out of her past. A silent and reserved nature, Hero has taken refuge from an unhappy home in the temple of Aphrodite, in order, as priestess of the goddess, to live for her thoughts. Much of the poet's own temperament has passed over into the proud self-sufficiency of Hero's character; one might say

¹ "Grey ancient times and the sun that has only risen to-day teach us one and the same thing: renunciation is the eternal lot of man; and there is no enjoyment but what one denies oneself." (*Entsagung* 1836.)

that she has found at the beginning of the drama "des Innern stillen Frieden", which Rustan only finds at the end of Grillparzer's next play *Der Traum, ein Leben*. And from this contented, harmonious existence she is ruthlessly torn by her love for Leander; her emotional balance is upset, and the end is, as it only can be, tragedy. But Grillparzer is too modern a poet, too consciously the heir of ages of moral systems and conflicting ideals of life, to rest content with a naïvely simple depiction of unhappy love; nor is it enough for him to reflect, in romantic allegory, the irresistible power of love in the waves of the Hellespont. His Hero awakens to an unsettling sense of the dualism of life; she, like all the poet's tragic figures, has a very un-Greek northern conscience. She sees her serene and happy world cleft in twain: duty and happiness have ceased to be one and the same thing; she is no longer capable of that concentration ("Sammlung") which is the mainspring of all effective endeavour. There is comparatively little outward movement in the play; but the spiritual movement is the richer and subtler. Contemporaries of the poet felt that the fourth act, coming as it does after the delightful love scene in Hero's tower, was arid and tedious; but the drama of psychological happenings has advanced far since Grillparzer wrote, and we are able to-day to understand better this side of his art. *Des Meeres und der Liebe Wellen* effects, it might I think be said, a reconciliation between the two contending forces in the literature of the preceding generation, the classic and the romantic. It is true, the combination of classic simplicity and romantic interest was already inherent in the theme as Grillparzer found it; but his own Thorwaldsen-like outlook on classic art and his subtle modern psychology put the last touches to the reconciliation.

Des Meeres und der Liebe Wellen was followed in 1834 by *Der Traum, ein Leben* (*The Dream, a Life*), but this play is mainly a work of Grillparzer's first period;

it is written in the Spanish trochees of *Die Abnfrau*, and shows the same (or an even higher) mastery of stage-effect. It belongs to the category of "Märchen-dramen", which were exceedingly popular on the Vienna stage; and the title indicates a certain affinity with Calderón's famous play. The theme was one entirely after the poet's own heart. Rustan, a typical Grillparzian hero, whose desires and ambitions outrun his power to realize them, sighs for a more resonant life than his uncle's roof affords him. His negro slave, Zanga, paints to him the glories of the soldier's life, the excitement of the battlefield; nay, why should he not aspire still higher? "The king of Samarcand was like thee, a village boy." And Rustan obtains his uncle's permission to seek his fortune, to leave his cousin Mirza for a more dazzling happiness. But night has come down and he postpones his departure till the morrow. The harp of a dervish from the hills is heard outside the window, and Rustan, lying on his couch, listens, with passionate, impatient contradiction, to the dervish's song proclaiming that all the good things and the joys of life are only shadows. As Rustan falls asleep, the reality changes with delicate symbolism to the dream, and the dream now becomes for the audience the reality. With fine psychological art, Grillparzer blends the young man's waking experiences with the realization of his ambition at the court of Samarcand; and still more subtly he conveys to us the sense of a nightmare in the catastrophe in which Rustan becomes involved. He awakens with relief and a changed outlook: he has learned the Grillparzian lesson of life, that happiness consists not in greatness or in fame, but in inward peace of mind and heart.

The reception of *Der Traum, ein Leben* had been satisfactory, but its success was more than counter-balanced by the failure of Grillparzer's one comedy, *Weh' dem, der lügt* (*Woe to him who lies*) on March 6th, 1838. The inability of the fickle Viennese public to

appreciate this play is difficult to understand; for there is no more genuine comedy in all dramatic literature: it is full of life and exuberant humour. Possibly the real fault of the play was its originality; it was different from other comedies: contemporaries even debated whether it was a comedy at all. The Austrians of Metternich's day felt, perhaps, that it was a little too grimly serious that an irrepressible scullion of the Bishop of Chalons should carry out his mission of rescuing the Bishop's nephew not by deceit, but by always telling the truth, while the heavy-witted custodian of the prisoner naturally assumes that he is lying; possibly they even detected an undercurrent of satire against themselves in the play. However that may be, *Weß dem, der lügt* failed, and for the moody poet it was the last straw: he gave up the struggle and wrote no more for the theatre, or, at least, made no further attempt to produce a play.

In this brief survey of Grillparzer's work I have been unable to speak of several of his works which are well deserving of closer study: the fine, if too inexorably ruthless tragedy of the Kantian imperative of duty, *Ein treuer Diener seines Herrn* (*A Faithful Servant of his Master*, 1828), the historical tragedy of *Ein Bruderkrieg in Habsburg* (*A Brothers' Feud in Habsburg*), with its magnificent portrait—the finest that Grillparzer ever drew—of Matthias, brother of Rudolf II: *Die Jüdin von Toledo* (*The Jewess of Toledo*), a masterly adaptation of a drama by Lope de Vega, which shows the affinity of Grillparzer's genius to that of the great Spaniard whom he appreciated and loved as did no other of his contemporaries: or *Libussa*, a tragedy which more than one among recent critics has regarded as the poet's masterpiece. But *Libussa* belongs to the period of the poet's divorce from the theatre, and, in spite of its manifold beauties, it has lost thereby more than it has gained. Grillparzer was too good a dramatist to do great work without thought of the stage.

"All things come to him who waits"—all things perhaps, but one may have to wait too long. Vienna recognized her greatest poet only when his race was nearly run. "Too late, too late!" was the cry that rang all through Grillparzer's life; this was the bitterness of his tragedy. No German writer was ever the centre of such a celebration as that which greeted his eightieth birthday; and when he died in 1872, no poet, except perhaps Klopstock, had a more imposing funeral cortège. Had only one tithe of all these honours fallen to him in the zenith of his career, when *Web' dem, der lügt* met its fate on the Vienna stage in 1838, the dramatic literature of the German-speaking world might have been the richer by many master-pieces.

And yet, with all his despair and self-distrust, Grillparzer had an inner consciousness of his own worth, which no real genius is ever totally without.

Will unsre Zeit mich bestreiten,
 Ich lass' es ruhig gescheh'n,
 Ich komme aus andern Zeiten,
 Und hoffe in andre zu gehn.¹

The development of dramatic poetry in the course of the last fifty years has, in great measure, justified this boast. Byron's prophecy may not yet be fully realized, but in German-speaking lands Grillparzer has long been accepted as a classic. He takes his place, at least, in the front rank of the European poets of the nineteenth century who have written for the theatre; what is perhaps more significant is that his poetry is essentially modern, as *Brand* and *Peer Gynt* are modern. Grillparzer was one of those misappreciated geniuses whose message has meant more for the age which came after them than for their own.

¹ "Will our time deny me, I let it do so, unperturbed; I come from other times and hope to pass into others."

GOTTFRIED KELLER

THERE are books, standing high in esteem, which set at defiance the laws of composition established by the usage and theorizing of generations: badly constructed books, books lacking in balance, and with all manner of loose ends and inconsequences; and yet how often it is just to these that we return for solace and delight, when the masterpieces on which criticism has long set the stamp of its approval are allowed to rest undisturbed in their classic tranquillity. Such books are to be found in every literature; but while the Romance peoples are inclined to allow only a goodly admixture of humour to condone formlessness, the literatures of the north look rather for the expression of personality. But obviously this personality must be more than the mere expression of the author's self; it must hold the mirror up to his readers too. "The entire influence," says Goethe, "which one man can have on another, is effected through his personality." Spiritual attunement between the poet and his audience is essential to that subjective art in which the literatures of the northern races are so rich; it is the secret of the eternal appeal of that art, from the mediæval German *Parzival* to the eighteenth-century *Faust*. Such works are, as one of the later Middle High German poets said of his poem, "seas into which many rivers pour", but also seas beneath whose surface lies the sunken Vineta of the reader's own soul; he hears from the depths the pealing of the bells of a submerged city.

Der grüne Heinrich by Gottfried Keller is a book of this kind. This huge, formless, badly proportioned novel, with its irrelevant episodes and often distracting

aimlessness, is the "Dichtung und Wahrheit" of its author's life. Keller is himself the young Heinrich Lee, whose green clothes, cut down out of his father's uniforms, are the occasion of his sobriquet. It is his own childhood in the great beehive of a house in the Zürich Rindermarkt which he describes with such irresistible charm in the first volume of the work. The changes he has made are not great, and are to be regarded rather as a veil drawn over reality than as an attempt to falsify it in the interests of a more engaging fiction. Keller's father, who died in 1824 at the age of thirty-three, was, for instance, a turner and wood-carver, while his hero's is a builder; his grandfather was a surgeon in Glattfelden, not a pastor. Keller did not grow up, like his Heinrich, alone; he had a sister, Regula, who in later life kept house for him. But all the child's early school experiences and spiritual development are real. Occasional echoes of Goethe's autobiography are to be heard, as in the description of the *milieu* and, notably, of Heinrich's incipient interest in the theatre. There is perhaps a memory of George Sand's biography where young Heinrich's religious sense begins to awaken, or of Rousseau's *Confessions*; indeed, the author accused himself in later life of having taken over something of Rousseau's "konfessioneller Herbigkeit"; but I cannot think that there is much of Rousseau in *Der grüne Heinrich*. If we are to look for a definite prototype of the kind of story which Keller planned, it might be found in Balzac's *Le chef d'oeuvre inconnu*, which he read with approval in 1838.¹ But the German Romantic tradition is paramount. An Eichendorffian lyricism lies over the delightful description of Heinrich's native village, with even a distinct echo of the *Taugenichts* when Heinrich sets out into the great world; and there is an occasional intrusion of old-fashioned Romantic fantasy, as in the stories of

¹ E. Ermatinger, *Gottfried Kellers Leben, Briefe und Tagebücher*. Auf Grund der Biographie J. Baechtolds, 3 vols, Stuttgart, 1915, I, p. 281.

“Das Meretlein” and “Frau Margret und ihre Leute”, which form the most interesting episodes of the first volume. But this first part owes its charm not to literary imitation; it delights us as a matchless autobiography of a child.

The second volume is less directly autobiographical. Heinrich Lee, after being, like the author himself, unjustly expelled from school, gradually arrives at the conviction that he is born to be an artist. In the course of a holiday with an uncle in the country, two love episodes wind themselves into his life. Again, no doubt, memories of personal experience played a larger part than literary traditions. The consumptive Anna was a reflection of Keller's first love, who inspired the “siebenundzwanzig Liebeslieder” of his collection of *Poems*, but her father was no idyllic village schoolmaster, and she lived and died on no imaginary lakelet near his uncle's village, but in Zürich itself. In the same way, there seems to have been in Glattfelden a relative named Judith, who, like the Judith of the story, emigrated to America; but it is doubtful whether more than the very first scenes in which she appears had a basis in experience. Keller himself insisted that there was no reality in either Anna or Judith; but one has to remember that, all his life long, he resented attempts to link up the “Dichtung” of his work with the “Erlebnis”. The performance of Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* as a “Volksfest”, which occupies so large a part of the second volume, and with which that volume culminates, was probably suggested by memories of a similar performance of *Wallensteins Lager*. In the middle of the third volume the story of Heinrich's boyhood reaches its close, and we find him—as Keller himself at the age of twenty-one—continuing his study of art in Munich. The reader is, however, suddenly conscious of a change. The book, which through more than five hundred pages has held our attention fast, not by the interest of the events it describes, but

by a certain magnetic appeal to our sympathy, by its delicate *chiaroscuro* of flitting poetic moods, suddenly becomes a dull chronicle. The chapters seem to have become intolerably long. And yet the new *milieu* to which Heinrich is transferred, where he lives as an artist among artists in Munich, ought intrinsically to be more interesting to the general reader than the provinciality amidst which his childhood is passed. He assists, for instance, at a "Nürnberg" festival, which is described at great length, but how differently from the analogous festival in the second volume, where *Tell* is performed! That had been for Heinrich a great living experience, and the reader is made to live through it with him; but the Munich festival, which, as a matter of fact, had taken place some months before Keller himself came to Munich, is tedious in its detail and inadequately welded with the story. Keller had himself lived the life of an art student in Munich, but he fails to transfer his experiences to paper; he conveys to us nothing of the atmosphere of Bavarian bohemianism; his Heinrich seems to stand apart from it all, and can only drily relate his share in it. He makes two friends, the painters Lys and Erikson, who represent in different ways that failure to achieve success which the hero himself is to experience. No doubt they were, to some extent, modelled on real friends; but they are only shadows—more so than Anna and Judith in the earlier part—merely literary creations that might have been imitated from Mörike's novel, *Maler Nolten*, were it not that Keller assures us he did not read that book until 1876.¹ Lys and Erikson become involved in their love affairs, which are told at excessive length, and Heinrich champions, even to the extent of a challenge to a duel, Lys's mistress, Agnes. Then Heinrich's friends leave Munich and he is alone; and so

¹ In his excellent study, *Der grüne Heinrich als Künstlerroman*, Stuttgart, 1919, p. 72, Paul Schaffner suggests that the undeniable similarities between *Maler Nolten* and *Der grüne Heinrich* were due to the fact that both books were influenced by Jean Paul's *Titan*.

little care had Keller for the construction of his story that we now reach a stage when there is not a single actor left except the hero. But it is just here that the reader begins to feel gripped again, to be sensible of the old magic. Heinrich's failure as an artist is clear ; he has spent five years—Keller himself spent only two and a half—on his vain quest ; he is now without a friend in the world. His mother has done her utmost to supply him with money ; but at last the day comes when he has absolutely nothing to satisfy his hunger. An old flute saves him ; he sells it to a dealer who is also willing to buy his sketches, and who engages him to paint flagpoles in the Bavarian colours—white with a spiral blue line—for a royal wedding.

With money at last in his pocket, he sets out for home, and, after some days' wandering, finds himself the guest of a Graf, who had taken a fancy to his pictures and had bought them up from the dealer. The reader is inclined to smile at this and other romantic coincidences, but he smiles indulgently, for in the course of this long book he has grown to feel warmly towards the author and his hero. It is perhaps pardonable, too, that Keller should have desired to show that the unkind world had not all the right on its side and that his Heinrich had some talent. Moreover, these scenes in the Graf's castle are full of poetic fancy ; and the heroine of this episode—the Graf's adopted daughter, Dortchen Schönfund, to whom Keller's Berlin love, Betty Tendering, lent traits—is finely enough drawn to be singled out as the first example of the definitely Keller type of woman. The Graf's generosity leads to a more hopeful turn in Heinrich's fortunes ; but he ultimately continues his journey home, and arrives to find his mother dying. He himself ends as an official in his native town. On a hint from Theodor Storm, Keller rounded off the novel by letting Judith return from America—not, however, to marry. Keller's

poetic instinct happily saved him from the temptation of so banal a convention.

Such is an outline of Keller's novel, as it presents itself to the reader of the Collected Works. But it differs considerably from the form in which it originally appeared in 1854 and 1855. After Keller returned disillusioned from Munich, he planned, probably in the winter of 1842-3, what he described as "a sad little novel on the tragic breaking-off of a young artist's career, which wrecks the lives of both mother and son."¹ This was obviously the germ of *Der grüne Heinrich*; it was to have been one of those liberating "confessions" of the author's own life, such as mark the stages in Goethe's. Keller was then twenty-three. Born in Zürich on July 19th, 1819, he had set out in life with no contemptible talent as an artist.² Years of hard work and privation had to be gone through, before it was borne in upon him that this was not his "God-given hest"; and in spite of some experiments in story-writing, and a promising collection of poems (1846) influenced by the new political lyric of Herwegh, Anastasius Grün and Freiligrath, it was far from easy for him to find his *métier*. The oldest existing fragment of *Der grüne Heinrich* dates from the year 1846. Keller took what he had written with him to Heidelberg, whither, with the help of a State stipendium, he had gone as a university student in 1848. The plan of the novel, as it then hovered before him, would seem to have begun with his hero's departure for Munich. Here he fails to justify his choice of a profession, finds himself ultimately without resources, and sets out for home; on the way he is hospitably entertained by a nobleman, but does not regain faith in himself. He returns to find his mother dead, and he himself dies—in another plan he was to have killed himself—

¹ *G. Kellers nachgelassene Werke und Dichtungen*, ed. J. Baechtold, Berlin, 1893, p. 18. (Schaffner, *op. cit.*, p. 24.)

² See, besides Schaffner's study, C. Brun, *G. Keller als Maler*, Zürich, 1894, and H.E. von Berlepsch, *Gottfried Keller als Maler*, Leipzig, 1895.

crushed by his sense of guilt.¹ But still more years were to elapse before Keller took the story seriously in hand. The literary instinct was, however, becoming more clamorous for expression, and in 1850 Keller went to Berlin, where he spent nearly six years. His experience there was not dissimilar to that in Munich. Still on the quest of his mission in life—this time he sought it in the drama—he had to confess himself once more baffled and disillusioned. This second failure was surely much more of a foregone conclusion than when his ambition was set on being a painter; for every line Keller has written belies real dramatic talent. None the less, these Berlin years represent the most important stage in his apprenticeship to letters. By degrees—and, it must be admitted, reluctantly—Keller got into touch with Berlin literary society, and found a good friend in Varnhagen von Ense. But as in Munich, money troubles set in again, the small pension which he had from the Swiss government coming to an end in 1852. This was perhaps not altogether a misfortune, for it brought pressure on him to turn his literary ambitions to a practical purpose. In 1851 he brought out a second collection of poems; he planned and wrote several short stories which were to find their place in later collections; and the long novel was got seriously under way. As early as the end of 1849 he had approached the Brunswick publisher Vieweg, who at once took a warm interest in the work. But then began what is surely one of the most extraordinary incidents in the history of publishing. The arrangements concluded, Keller could not be induced to work. Neither the most sympathetic encouragement on the publisher's part nor money advances helped. Then Vieweg threatened legal proceedings; and yet again invited the author to accept free board and lodging in Brunswick, until the book was finished. The printing of Volume I was begun in August 1850, but it was not

¹ Cp. Ermatinger, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 284 f.

all in type until the autumn of the following year. More than twelve months elapsed before the second volume could be set up; Volume III was ready in November 1853, and the first three volumes were published with the date 1854; Volume IV did not follow until May 1855. When, in 1877, Keller resolved to remodel this work of his youth, he had to buy up the first edition, the demand for which had been, owing to its dilatory appearance, negligible; he used the copies—most of them, it is true, were incomplete or damaged—to light the fires of his house on the Bürgli in Zürich, and pronounced a solemn curse on anyone who should republish it in its original form. In recent years, however, the house of Cotta has braved the consequences, and thus made accessible a book which had become one of the prizes of the German book-collector.¹

Opinion is divided between the two forms of the work. The later edition has the advantage of being shorter: of having the many excrescences lopped off, the proportions improved; but I am not sure that it is not still more satisfying to read *Der grüne Heinrich*—if one does not shrink from its enormous and unnecessary length—in its old unwieldy form. The first edition ends tragically; Heinrich has failed in life; his mother is dead; he has nothing to live for, and he finds rest beneath the green sod. “Es war ein schöner freundlicher Sommerabend, als man ihn mit Verwunderung und Teilnahme begrub, und es ist auf seinem Grabe ein recht frisches und grünes Gras gewachsen.” Keller’s friends and critics disapproved of the ending; but it was probably not so much in deference to them as to his own wish to bring the book more into line with his own experience that the new Green Heinrich lives, and the book closes on a note of renunciation. The change involved the

¹ G. Keller, *Der grüne Heinrich*; Studienausgabe der ersten Fassung. Herausg. und eingeleitet von E. Ermatinger, Stuttgart, 1914. This will be included in the critical edition of Keller’s works, which is announced by Cotta.

elimination of much in the early version that pointed to a tragic ending, and Keller did his best to soften its acerbities; but he has not altogether succeeded. Such satisfaction as we can draw from the new close is frankly due to the fact that we still feel it to be essentially tragic: after all, there are more tragedies in life than those that end in death. In the new version Keller avoids the clumsy technique, in accordance with which he began with Heinrich Lee's journey to Munich and then inserted the account of his early life as a "manuscript" written by the hero himself. By converting the whole novel into a narrative in the first person, a greater unity is attained, and also perhaps some exoneration for its subjective formlessness; but much that is related about fictitious personages cannot be told by themselves in the first person, and Keller's efforts to give the narrative a semblance of probability are often clumsy. The sudden falling off which the reader feels in the Munich part of the story is no doubt due to the fact that it was written first, when Keller was still only feeling his way. Here the purely literary influences predominate, as is to be seen in the characters of Lys and Erikson; "literary", too, is the carnival masquerade. The romantic German mind had a kind of histrionic craving to see its abstract ideas visualized in such masquerades; one thinks again of *Maler Nolten*, or of those court entertainments in Weimar on which Goethe often frittered away his genius. As soon, however, as Keller began, with autobiographic truth, to relate the story of his own early life, he found his feet. Thus this, the most precious part of the *Grüne Heinrich*, was something of an afterthought—there is no allusion to it in the early plans—and it was possibly not written at all until after the author went to Berlin. I am inclined, too, to think that his first intention was to insert it, not in Volume I, but after Chapter ii of Volume IV, the point which he had probably reached when he began to write it.

The most suggestive of Keller's older critics, Otto Brahm, was the first I think to make out a case for the influence of Jean Paul Friedrich Richter on *Der grüne Heinrich*.¹ Keller was a warm admirer of Richter in early days; and there are clear traces of his admiration in *Der grüne Heinrich*; the "sentimental" education of his hero by a simultaneous love for two such different women as Anna and Judith recalls the similar experience of Albano, the hero of Richter's *Titan*; Judith is Richter's Linda, Anna his Liane. Keller's affectionate dwelling on meticulous phases of sentiment and emotion is also a heritage from his predecessor. But it would be unwise to insist too much on direct influence. Keller's enthusiasm for Richter died down comparatively early; and the glowing eulogy of him which appears in the first edition of the novel is reduced to very modest proportions in the second.² Much in the *Grüne Heinrich* which sounds like Jean Paul may perhaps have been filtered through the contemporary literature of "Young Germany". Least of all, it seems to me, can one claim a kinship between the humour of Keller and that of Jean Paul. The latter's humour, which now, after more than a hundred years, has ceased to appeal to most of us as humour at all, falls into two main categories: the humour of the grotesque, that is to say the Rabelais-Fischart type which depends for its effect upon the incongruous juxtaposition of metaphors and attributes, and the humour of sentimental irony which goes back, of course, to Sterne, and behind Sterne, in an unsentimental form, to Cervantes. It was Sterne that appealed especially to Richter's Romantic contemporaries. The first of these categories of humour was, by 1850, too old-fashioned to

¹ O. Brahm, *Gottfried Keller; ein literarischer Essay*, Berlin, 1883; cp. also Frieda Jacggi, *Gottfried Keller und Jean Paul*, Berlin, 1913.

² Cp. first ed. (1914 rep.), I, pp. 357 f. and *Gesammelte Werke*, Berlin, 1889, I, pp. 275 f. To Adolf Frey (A. Frey, *Erinnerungen an Gottfried Keller*, 3rd ed., Leipzig, 1919, pp. 32 f.) Keller said of Richter; "Von einer Wirkung auf meine Produktion kann . . . in der von einigen Literarhistorikern angenommenen Weise durchaus nicht die Rede sein."

appeal to Keller, unless we may find a remnant of it in his occasional lapses into a rather boisterous "Kneiphumor"; and as he has none of the tearful eighteenth-century sentimentality of Richter, he is under no temptation to employ irony as an antidote to it. Keller's strength as a humorist lies rather in the sunny geniality of his outlook on life, in the kindly sympathy—a sympathy without that touch of ironic superiority the earlier romanticists were inclined to display towards their characters—which he bestows on the world of his creation. The adjective the Germans like to apply to it is "golden"; and no one would assuredly say that Jean Paul's humour had this quality. However, this belongs to a later phase of Keller's work, for there is not much humour in the first *Grüne Heinrich*.

Born in Switzerland, Keller was further removed from the Romantic atmosphere than his German contemporaries. Romanticism was to him a literary tradition; the reality amidst which he grew up was the sceptical, political and materialistic period that superseded Romanticism. His interest in the religious controversies stirred up by Strauss and Feuerbach, and especially that conversion of the old Romantic "aesthetic education" into an education in political ideals—a transition which Switzerland with her strong pedagogic interests and practical outlook on life naturally encouraged—has left deep traces on the *Grüne Heinrich*. It is one of the conspicuous values of Ermatinger's life of Keller that he emphasizes the importance for Keller's development of the teaching of Feuerbach, a thinker whose influence on mid-century literature is only beginning to be adequately realized.¹ Keller's allegiance to Feuerbach in Heidelberg made the breach with the old Romanticism irreparable. His own lyric awakening had been political, and was not, as it might well have been, due

¹ Ermatinger, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 195 ff. There is also a good monograph by H. Dünnebier, *G. Keller und L. Feuerbach*, Zürich, 1913.

to the stimulus of the Swabian school; and just as Heine, standing on the boundary between Romanticism and "Young Germany", sang, in his *Atta Troll*, the "last swan-song of Romanticism", so Keller, in his *Apotheker von Chamounix*, a kind of counterpart to *Atta Troll*, contributed his quota to the poetry of mid-century disillusionment. The severance of the Romantic ties meant, however, much less of a heart-wrench to the Swiss poet, than to the Düsseldorf Jew who closed his eyes on his infinitely tragic "mattress-grave" not long after Keller's *Apotheker* was written.

Thus, like Heine, like so many German men of letters who wrote at the middle or shortly before the middle of the century, Keller illustrates the great transition of his time, that from the spiritual "other-worldliness" of Romanticism to the hard realities of science and industrialism; and it is on the threshold of the new time that *Der grüne Heinrich* stands. It is a "Bildungsroman", a type which elsewhere I have claimed as the national type of German fiction, that is to say, the history of a soul in its search for its mission in life. In the widest acceptance of the term it is, of course, possible to say that all the great novels of the world are "Bildungsromane", when they are not merely narratives of travel and adventure; but the German ideal was definitely influenced by the enthusiasm of the eighteenth century for pedagogic ideals. The heroes of these typical German novels are subjected to a sentimental education—"sentimental" not in the Flaubertian sense, but in that of Sterne or Schiller. *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* is the type, and one can see it evolving in the eighteenth century from Wieland's *Agathon* onwards; and to this type the Romantic movement of the nineteenth century remained faithful through a long line of mainly fragmentary soul-histories—*Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen*, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, *Abnung und Gegenwart*, *Maler Nolten*. It is to this royal line that

Der grüne Heinrich belongs. It presents us with the picture of a romantic soul in its progress through art and poetry to life; and, just as *Wilhelm Meister* evolved from a specific "artist novel"—a novel of the theatre—into a work dealing with man's attitude to the problems of the individual life, and, in the later stage of the *Wanderjahre*, with his relations to the whole complex of society, so, under the influence of Feuerbach, *Der grüne Heinrich* outgrows its original plan of describing the education of a painter, and becomes the history of a young soul struggling in the spiritual fermentation of eighty years ago. And *Der grüne Heinrich* is what *Wilhelm Meister* was not: a tragedy. Green Heinrich is shipwrecked on the ideal he fails to attain; or, might we not rather say, he comes to grief, because the Romantic world in which he had striven to make himself a denizen, had itself passed away before his apprenticeship was at an end? Keller's novel is not merely in the royal line, not merely the last of the Romantic novels, and the fullest and richest of them all: but a novel that stands on the threshold of the modern world.

There is another aspect of Keller's *Grüner Heinrich* which may be regarded as a finger-post for his subsequent development: embedded in the autobiography of the novel are several detachable stories; and there is a tendency, in the parts which were written last, to segregate into episodes. As a matter of fact, Keller's real strength, as he ultimately discovered, lay not in the long novel at all, but in the "Novelle". Leaving aside the two collections of poems already mentioned—poems of surprising freshness and originality in an age when the German lyric lay hypnotized under the influence of the Romantic lyricists, tonic bitters after too many sweets, as Spitteler called them—Keller's next work, written with much less effort and procrastination, was a collection of short stories, *Die Leute von Seldwyla* (1851-54).

“Seldwyla means in the older language a pleasant and sunny spot, and such in fact was the little town of this name which lies somewhere in Switzerland.” As some of the stories imply that Seldwyla was by no means little, Keller in his genial touches of satire was doubtless thinking mainly of his own native town, Zürich. The scene of the stories is presented to us as a modern Abdera or Schilda, towns which had long been household words in German literature, the one from Wieland’s freshest novel, the other from an old “Volksbuch” which Tieck had furbished up anew in his early days. But the satire of these two older writers is essentially of that rather self-complacent eighteenth-century type, which takes its stand on a firmly established code of right and wrong, and is only too consciously aware of the line that separates what is ridiculous from what is not; he who runs has no difficulty in reading. Occasionally Keller does fall into a blunt kind of irony that recalls Wieland, as when he tells us “the founder of the town planted it a good half hour from a navigable river as a plain sign that nothing was to come of it.” But his methods are, as a rule, finer, his persiflage is more delicate. His Seldwylites he describes as entirely good-natured and happy. The young people, who are the peculiar glory of the town, employ others to do their work for them, while they themselves make the debts which are the real source of the town’s welfare and satisfaction. But this aristocracy of youth drops out of the race at an age when the men of other towns are only coming into their own, and the young Seldwylite, if he has anything in him, goes abroad and enters military service, to return in later years as a drill-sergeant of young Switzerland. The Seldwylite who stays at home, learns, as he grows older, to put his hand to a thousand little things, which fill out his time and keep body and soul together, but otherwise lead to nothing. Politicians, too, these people are in the grand style; happiest when they are

in opposition to the government; and when money troubles threaten the town, they are full of great schemes of reform.

In this framework of not unkindly satire Keller encases a series of short stories. *Pankraz, der Schmoller*, which opens the first volume, begins admirably in the spirit of the Preface; there is much of the author himself in the sulking hero, and something, too, of Jean Paul; but the method by which the hero is cured of his sulking, by a lion, savours of Romantic extravagance. Keller, like most writers that matter, was not a good inventor of plots; and his genius, when not held in check by a realism imposed from without, was inclined to run to exaggeration. *Frau Regel Amrain und ihr Jüngster* is a much better example of Keller's powers; it is a real slice of personal experience, with a considerable infusion of the national enthusiasm for education: not perhaps quite interesting enough to stand by itself, or sufficiently welded together into an artistic whole, but essentially true and free from extravagance. Between these two items lies a very different type of story, in which Seldwyla and its amiable foibles hardly matter. *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* is a "Novelle" of peasant-life, and has been justly praised as the finest of its type in German literature.¹ The basis of the story was a brief and commonplace newspaper report from Saxony, which described how two young lovers had been found dead in a field near Leipzig; and on this report Keller built up an engrossing village tragedy. The story opens with a Millet-like picture of two peasants ploughing their acres. Between the fields they own lies a third, whose possessor is unknown; and each year the peasants

¹ There is a translation by A. C. Bahlmann, with an introduction by Edith Wharton, New York, 1914; and it is included with *The Landvogt of Greifensee, The Company of the Upright Seven* and *Ursula* in the American series of *German Classics of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, vol. XIV, New York, 1914. *A Village Romeo and Juliet*, a Tale by Gottfried Keller, with an introduction by Edith Wharton, appeared in London in 1915.

appropriate a few furrows from it. It is ultimately sold, one of the peasants is the purchaser, and a lawsuit is brought by the other over a corner of it. The consequence is that both men, obsessed by a grim and dogged hostility to each other, are ruined: one becomes an innkeeper in the town; the other goes slowly but surely downwards on his field. The son and daughter of this rustic Montague and Capulet, Sali and Vrenchen, have played together as children; they come together again as lovers. Vrenchen's father discovers her one day with Sali, and in the stormy scene which follows, the latter, in defence of the girl, wounds her father so seriously with a stone that he becomes an imbecile. The prospects of their union are now completely destroyed. The house on the acre is sold over Vrenchen's head, and one Sunday, she and her lover dress themselves up in their best, and set out across the country to have one last day of complete happiness before they part. The description of this Sunday, of their gradual envelopment by that merciless love, which, even with these simple children of the soil, "*a nullo amato amar perdona*", is one of the subtlest and most delicate in modern literature. None of the great tragic poets has followed out with a firmer hand the behests of an implacable moral *ἀνάγκη*, or conceived a situation more full of tragic pity than when, in the chill dawn of the autumn morning, the two lovers slip from the drifting hay-barge into the river, in a last embrace. Well might Paul Heyse, on the strength of this story, hail Keller as "the Shakespeare of the *Novelle*!" The introduction of the touch of Romantic fantasy in the "black fiddler"—a legacy possibly from E. T. A. Hoffmann—is a little out of keeping with the realism of the picture; for it is just in its bed-rock veracity that Keller's art makes its overwhelming appeal. Here he stands out as the legitimate successor of the first European master of the "peasant-novel," Jeremias Gotthelf, of whom our own Ruskin was so

warm an admirer. The realism of *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* is the realism, freed from the dross of details that do not matter, of *Uli der Knecht* and *Elsi, die seltsame Magd*: it is the essentially national element in Keller's work; the romanticism is only the German literary varnish. One cannot help regretting that in after years, Keller, distrustful, it may have been, of his nation's ability to stand alone, and insistent on German Switzerland's solidarity in literature with the North, gave his *Romeo und Julia* no successor. He fell back—unfortunately, if one may say so without seeming ungrateful for not a few masterpieces—into that complacent mid-century German "idealism", which for a generation successfully resisted the clamorous knocking at the door of a more virile literary art.

Die drei gerechten Kammacher with its admirably characterized types of Saxon, Bavarian and Swabian, and still better, the delightful Züs Bünzlin, to whose hand they aspire, shows Keller's powers as a humorist at their best. The Keller devotee is, indeed, inclined to regard the ability to appreciate this story as a kind of passport to the circle of the faithful. Most readers, however, would probably have liked to see a little less farcicality in the baroque close (the race by which the three apprentices decide their claim to their bankrupt master's business), and a little less acerbity in the decision of their ultimate fates. But that is perhaps, after all, the real Keller flavour in the story.

The second volume of Seldwyla novels, which did not appear until 1874, is of inferior interest to the first. *Der Schmied seines Glückes*, and *Die missbrauchten Liebesbriefe*¹ are both early productions, written in Keller's Berlin days. The former seems to me, with its grotesque humour, to deserve a higher place than Keller's admirers are inclined to give it;

¹ The second of these appeared in an English translation, together with *Clothes make the Man* and *Dietegen*, in *Gottfried Keller: A selection of his Tales, with Memoir*, by Mrs. Freiligrath Kroecker, London, 1891; re-issued in 1894, under the title: *Clothes maketh Man, and other Swiss stories*.

but *Die missbrauchten Liebesbriefe* falls badly asunder into literary satire and a story which has no organic connection with the satire; while the last item in the volume, *Das verlorene Lachen* is, as a story, dull and uninteresting; at best, it may be regarded as a forerunner of the political novel of *Martin Salander* with which Keller's career closes. One has most pleasure from *Kleider machen Leute*. This seems to have been suggested by a real incident, although the situation is familiar in literary tradition. A poor tailor is, as the consequence of a practical joke played upon him, forced into the rôle of a nobleman, and wins a rich wife, with the unexpected conclusion that she does not repudiate him when she learns he is not the fine gentleman his clothes make him appear to be. Keller's management of the "peripeteia" is fresh and skilful; his humour is kept within stricter bounds than in the *Kammacher*, and is free from the touch of cynicism which created something of a dissonance in the earlier work. On the other hand, the fifteenth-century tale, *Dietegen*, in spite of many fine touches, suffers from the artificiality of its plot, and the lack of reality in its pseudo-historical background. The theme is a kind of echo of *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe*, but it is set in the framework of an unreal fairy-tale, and ends without tragedy.

Dietegen is, however, Keller's first experiment in the genre of the historical tale; it forms a transition to the *Züricher Novellen*, which appeared at Christmas 1877. Here, again, he has chosen to group together his stories in a framework; but the framework this time is not strong enough to support its burden. A certain Jacques, a young Züricher of average talents, is on the search for originality, and his godfather tells him a series of stories to illustrate and drive home the rather trite or, at least, not very essential moral that "a good original is only one who deserves to be imitated." This fondness for cycles and series is an interesting trait in Keller's mentality; it appears

again in his *Sinngedicht* and *Sieben Legenden*; it is to be seen in his "three" combmakers, the "five" loves of the Landvogt von Greifensee, the "upright seven". Perhaps we may discern a certain connection between this love of orderly arrangement and the punctiliousness of the Zürich official—for fifteen years, from 1861 to 1876, Keller was "Staatssekretär" of the Canton of Zürich, and "the best Staatssekretär that Switzerland ever had"—who allowed no excuses of artistic temperament to come between him and the fulfilment of his duties. The cyclical character of the *Züricher Novellen* is, however, ignored in the latter part of the book. *Hadlaub* is a deft love-story woven round the scribe to whom, under the patronage of the Swiss patrician Manesse, we owe the great Heidelberg manuscript of the Minnesingers; while *Der Narr auf Manegg*, a sixteenth century story, purports to be an incident in the subsequent history of the Manesse family. Both of these, and especially *Hadlaub*, represent a great advance in historical veracity over *Dietegeu*. Keller's "golden middle ages" may be too serene and too highly coloured to be very true; but it was not his business as a poet to scrutinize too precisely the gulf that separated the poetic conventions of the Minnesang from the crude realities of mediaeval life. He has, we might say, skimmed the cream of poetry from the age and grafted—often with a very plausible ingenuity—a delightful romance on the lyrics of Hadlaub himself that have come down to us. *Ursula*, in which Zwingli is the chief historical figure and the Battle of Cappel the central event, is, on the whole, and, in spite of an unsatisfactory close, the best constructed of all Keller's purely historical novels: while *Das Fähnlein der sieben Aufrechten* gives an admirable picture of Swiss life and political conditions in what was almost Keller's own time. The older generation of politicians, who, "born in the eighteenth century, had grown up with the new ideas", is contrasted with the new; and thus

a half century of Swiss history, culminating in the great "Schützenfest" at Aarau in 1849, seems to pass before us. Here Keller is describing the Switzerland he knows; and one does not need to be told that his "upright seven" had their prototypes in Zürich. But with all its freshness the story bears the stamp of the earlier period in Keller's work, when he was not over scrupulous in his handling of artistic probability.

Much the finest story in this collection and one of the high points of Keller's achievement is *Der Landvogt von Greifensee*. The Switzerland he describes here is that of the late eighteenth century; but the *milieu* matters as little in this story as the Seldwyla background did in *Romeo und Julia*. The Landvogt von Greifensee was a well-known historical personage whom Goethe had known, and whose life was written in 1820 by David Hess—a book which appeared in a convenient reprint some years ago.¹ He lived as district judge at Greifensee near Zürich from 1789 till his death in 1818. Keller has clothed in flesh the character Hess describes, utilizing ingeniously the more striking incidents and details of the biography, even, indeed, some that are almost too fantastic to be credible in a mere story. The Landvogt's biographer tells us that "his house was managed by a very capable and faithful housekeeper, Marianna Klaissner; that he had never experienced a strong passion, but at different periods had felt strongly attached to two ladies, who were certainly worthy of his esteem." These are the only facts Keller found on which to build up his story. He makes the Landvogt give his housekeeper an account of his loves, and then invite the five ladies who had refused him to visit him, all on the same day. This means a cycle of little love stories hallowed by retrospect. Needless to say, the historical Landvogt is completely forgotten; Keller himself steps into his shoes, and describes his

¹ *Salomon Landolt; ein Charakterbild nach dem Leben ausgemalt von David Hess* (ed. E. Korrodi), Zürich u. Leipzig, 1912.

own affairs of the heart with irresistible charm and kindly humour: the novel becomes a personal confession; the ladies are portraits—some of them perhaps a little composite—drawn from the life, but with just that touch of Keller fantasy which makes them more precious than any real portrait. The delightful and inimitable *Figura Leu*, in particular, shows Keller's art at its best. The whole adventure is wound up in a romantic fashion by the *Landvogt* placing his future in the hands of his old loves; he asks them to decide whether he should marry his Marianne or a young maid of his household. They decide, by *Figura's* casting vote, for the latter, who is a page in disguise, with the consequence that the *Landvogt* is left to continue his bachelorhood undisturbed.

Keller himself never married. His German admirers are inclined to regard him as a kind of predestined bachelor; but I doubt if this view of him is a true one. Had any of the memories that flit through the pages of the *Landvogt von Greifensee* become realities for Keller, he would have had a greater, more sympathetic hold on life than when he spent his declining years in the house on the *Bürgli* with only his uncomprehending sister, *Regula*, as companion; the wine-house would certainly have had less temptation for him. His bachelorhood was not all due to a disinclination to marry; the truth is he was not prepossessing; this little man with the big head and the disproportionately short legs could never have been an attractive cavalier. Moreover, his character and manner did not compensate for his physical disadvantages, the picture his biographer draws of him being far from a sympathetic or likeable one; he was blunt, often offensively blunt, unamiable, lacking in the graces of social intercourse; and he succeeded in quarrelling sooner or later with most of his friends. It is strange, indeed, to find in his dealings with his fellow-mortals so little of that sunny geniality which one reads out of his books;

and one sometimes wonders how this rather *bourgeois* Zürich citizen could ever have written such delicate lyrics and wonderful stories, how he could have drawn women of such irresistible grace and charm. Some day we may see deeper into his mind and art ; for he was clearly not one of those open natures that wear their hearts on their sleeves : even his letters tell us little more than—in some respects, not as much as—his books. But it was something of a tragedy, no doubt, that he, with his great heart, should have found no helpmate to share his rich spiritual life, that he should have been doomed to do no more than

Süsse Frauenbilder zu erfinden,
Wie die bitt're Erde sie nicht hegt.

Nearly six years before the *Züricher Novellen*, Keller had published a very different kind of book under the title of *Sieben Legenden* (1872).¹ This is a series of old church legends written when the first *Grüne Heinrich* was passing through the press, and based on a collection made by the poet Kosegarten at the beginning of the century. In the hearts of many of Keller's admirers the *Sieben Legenden* holds the first place. Three of the legends, *Eugenia*, *Dorotheas Blumenkörbchen* and *Der schlimm=heilige Vitalis* are old church stories, which permit, with not too tragic consequences, the mingling of the naïve piety of the early Christian world with a strain of amiable worldliness. Three are legends of the Virgin, *Die Jungfrau und der Teufel*, *Die Jungfrau als Ritter*, and *Die Jungfrau und die Nonne*, in which the Virgin appears as the peacemaker and the conciliator in very worldly conflicts and troubles ; and the collection is rounded off by the most ethereal blend of poetry and music in modern literature, *Das Tanzlegendchen*, a veritable poem in prose. One is almost reluctant to endorse the high claim that is made for this collection, lest it should seem to suggest a depreciation of the great stories of the earlier books ;

¹ An English translation by Martin Wyness was published at Glasgow in 1911.

but of the beauty and delicacy of the *Sieben Legenden* there can be no question. That genial harmony, which is the most precious quality of Keller's mind in its maturity, lies over them; his rich imagination touches no false notes; he blends a naïve and primitive religious romanticism with a kindly, healthy, commonsense outlook, which expresses itself neither in crude scepticism, nor ridicule: but adds rather a richer, deeper gold to the aureole round the heads of the sanctified. In these legends—and it is surely a pity that Keller was induced to discard his original title, *Auf Goldgrund*, for the colourless one they now bear—Keller has broken, more definitely than in the *Züricher Novellen*, with the realism of his *Village Romeo und Juliet*, and has gone back to the old Romantic wonderland that knows neither time nor place. Might we not say that they, too, belong to the literature of mid-century transition, that in them Keller has, by virtue of his harmony-loving art, found a basis for reconciling the spiritualism of Romanticism with the scepticism that had been instilled into him by Feuerbach?

Less important is the cycle of "Novellen" which bears the title *Das Sinngedicht*. Although not published until 1881-1882, the plan of the collection and many of its stories date back to Keller's Berlin period. The book bears the stamp of that artificiality and estrangement from life's realities which were in favour in Germany in the middle of the nineteenth century, as an antidote to the prosaic literature of commonplace experience, and of political and social reform, for which "Young Germany" and its successors were responsible. Reinhart, a young student of natural science, whose eyes, owing to overwork, have begun to trouble him, sets out one summer morning on a holiday, with an epigram of Logau's running in his head:

Wie willst du weisse Lilien zu roten Rosen machen?
Küss' eine weisse Galatee: sie wird errötend lachen.

And he determines to put the epigram to the test. The pretty tollkeeper lets herself be kissed and laughs, but does not blush; a pastor's daughter blushes, but does not laugh, a third, the hostess of the Waldhorn inn, is not kissed at all, for he feels sure that she might laugh, but certainly would not blush. A letter which the pastor's daughter has given him to deliver brings him nearer to the solution of his problem. He arrives unexpectedly at his destination, and by mistake gives the lady, instead of the letter, the slip of paper on which he had noted Logau's epigram. This leads to explanations, then to a discussion with the fair Lucie, who is well able to hold her own, on the conditions of happy marriage; and a cycle of stories is inserted illustrating various aspects of the question. These stories are for the most part exotic, and exotic in more than the obvious sense that Keller went abroad for his subjects; they seem to me to give him little opportunity for that personal sympathy which is the compelling charm in the masterpieces of the Seldwyla series and the *Züricher Novellen*—some of them, indeed, are even just a little tedious—but the close, again in its artificial Romantic way, is quite delightful. Lucie and Reinhart find each other over a song of Goethe's; and in his new love Reinhart has forgotten all about his epigram; it is for Lucie to remind him that she has fulfilled both its conditions. Such a situation was entirely after Keller's heart.

There remains but one other greater work of Keller's, the novel of *Martin Salander* (1886), again a specifically Swiss work, dealing with essentially Swiss problems and Swiss political aspirations. The old spirit of satire creeps in again; and if Keller had first thought of calling his novel *Excelsior*, after Longfellow's poem, it was rather in ironic depreciation of the optimistic aspirations of young Switzerland than to encourage them. The apparent bankruptcy of the Swiss liberalism of 1869 did not allow

him to take a very roseate view of his country's future. *Martin Salander* is a novel with which a foreign reader, at least, has a difficulty in getting into real sympathy. Somehow the magic of Keller's style seems to have missed fire; he himself confessed that there was "too little poetry" in it; one feels that the hermit of the Zürich Bürgli was beginning to grow old.

When Keller died in 1890, he was only just beginning to be appreciated in his full significance. Between 1892 and 1897, Jakob Baechtold published his collection of Keller's letters embedded in an excellent and sympathetic biography, which for the first time threw full light on Keller's growth and personality; and during the war-years this biography has been re-edited and much expanded by Professor Ermatinger of Zürich. Since then, "Keller literature" has grown apace, and the celebration of the centenary in 1919 has been responsible for a new flood of books and essays, many of which, however, are only of transient interest. The first important step to an international recognition of Keller's genius was Professor Baldensperger's admirable monograph in 1899; and the allotment of an entire volume to Keller in the American series of *German Classics in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (1914) has emphasized the significance, for the English-speaking world, of a writer whom the late Richard M. Meyer frankly proclaimed "the greatest German poet since Goethe".¹ Tardy as was Keller's recognition in Germany, it cannot be said that his native land had greater insight; indeed, to this day Switzerland has always been niggardly in her regard for her men of letters, and preferred to leave France and Germany to discover them for her.²

¹ The English reader will find an attractive, although rather uncritical account of Keller, with plenty of translation, in Madame Marie Hay's *Story of a Swiss Poet*, Bern, 1920.

² Keller himself said to Adolf Frey (*Erinnerungen an Gottfried Keller*, ed. cit., p. 115): "Kein schweizerischer Dichter kommt in seiner Heimat zu Namen und Ansehen, bevor sie ihn aus Deutschland mit der grossen Trompete über die Grenze hereinführen."

Elsewhere I have pleaded for the German novel in all its unwieldy length, as a legitimate because national form of literary art. For the legitimacy of the "Novelle" or short story, there is no need to plead. In no other literary *genre*, with the single exception of the lyric, has the post-Goethean literature of Germany attained such artistic perfection as in the short story. Of the masters of this *genre* after the middle of the nineteenth century, Storm, in spite of the realistic strength of his later books, is the most persistently Romantic: his love of retrospect, of elegiac renunciation, betokens a mind that finds more satisfaction in the ideals of the past than of the present. Heyse, on the other hand, is the cosmopolitan who revels in the noble and the beautiful wherever he finds it, who delights in laying bare and analysing subtle emotions which Storm employs his "twilight art" to veil; where Storm's heroes renounce, Heyse's live out their lives to the full. Heyse represents that mingling of Romance and Germanic elements which it was Wieland's mission to effect in classical German literature; he is the embodiment of the longing of the North for the South. Italy draws him as irresistibly as it drew Winckelmann and Goethe, Thorwaldsen and Andersen. But the supreme mastery in this form of literature lies not with Germany, but with Switzerland; Conrad Ferdinand Meyer is a finer and sincerer writer than Heyse, and Keller a deeper and more universal one than Storm; both are greater artists in respect of colour and style. Meyer belongs by temperament to the Latin South, Keller to the Germanic North. Keller, indeed, is the greatest colourist among the writers of the short story; he had not begun life as a painter and lived through the dreary disillusionment of his "Green Heinrich" for nothing; what he failed to put on canvas he has reproduced in all its pristine freshness in his writings. The brilliancy and yet delicacy of colouring in the finest of Keller's

Swiss novels recalls the art of his famous countryman and friend, Arnold Böcklin, in many respects a kindred spirit: both men possessed the power of captivating the modern mind, in spite of its leanings towards a drabber naturalism; both form a bulwark of the romantic spirit in Europe in an unromantic age. For this I regard as Keller's peculiar "poetic mission": he succeeded better than any of his German contemporaries in keeping the old romantic ideals alive in the later nineteenth century. And this he achieved not by artificial imitation, nor by turning his back upon the aspiration of his own time. Rather did he, this disciple of Herwegh and Feuerbach, take his stand frankly in the unromantic, materially-minded present, and, wrestling with the spirit of the past, conquer it anew for his contemporaries.

CARL SPITTELER

IN these days of journalistic exuberance one has to be wary of the epithet "great". The candidates for greatness have been so numberless and have passed so relentlessly into the long silence, that it seems wiser to leave the substance of the word unexpressed. But if I venture to call Carl Spitteler one of the "great" poets of our time, I do so with the justification that for nearly a quarter of a century he has been regarded as such by not a few cautious and reliable observers of European poetry. For this Swiss poet is no new man, but a poet whose career in the course of human things cannot be far from its close. If Spitteler's genius was little recognized outside Switzerland, Germany and certain circles in France, before the Swedish Academy conferred upon him the Nobel prize in 1920, it was for reasons that only redound to his credit. In all his long life he has never sought popular favour; with genuine Swiss doggedness he has gone his own way; he has flung his works at the public with a defiant take-it-or-leave-it air, and refused to abate one jot or tittle of his spiritual independence to appease the many-headed monster. He is a lonely poet, perhaps the loneliest poet in Europe; lonely not merely by temperament, but also by virtue of a depth and obscurity which make him inaccessible to those that would read as they run. His books were regarded as enigmas when they appeared; they are enigmas still, but enigmas which, I believe, are well worth the effort of trying to read.

Carl Spitteler[†] was born on April 24th, 1845, at Liestal in Canton Basel-Land, where his father was

[†] Almost all Spitteler's works are published by the firm of Diederichs in Jena. In German there are helpful studies on him by C. Meissner,

Statthalter and subsequently Landschreiber or chancellor of the canton. In a delightful little book, *Meine frühesten Erlebnisse* (1914), he has described his earliest experiences—a hundred and fifty pages, written by a man of seventy about himself before the age of five—surely a *unicum* in the literature of reminiscence. He was sent to school in Basel, where he came under the influence of the literary historian Wilhelm Wackernagel, and, later, of Jakob Burckhardt, the famous historian of the Italian Renaissance, who was one of the decisive forces in his early life. For a time he travelled daily to school from his home in Liestal, and on one of these journeys he fell in with a youth some three years his senior, Joseph Viktor Widmann, who was to make a respected name for himself in Swiss literature, and who became Spitteler's life-long friend. As a child, he had been entirely without precocious literary instincts; he tells humorously how he made his first attempt to compose poetry, sitting under a cherry-tree with a pencil and a blank sheet of paper before him; but the inspiration refused to come. His first talent—and it seems to have been considerable—was rather for drawing; and a little later came a love of music. It is significant for Spitteler's work that the artist in him was moulded, not by literary example, but by pictures and by the sonatas of Beethoven. He dated his spiritual awakening, indeed, from a visit to a musical aunt in the summer of 1861. "In those days", he says, "I learned to feel before art humility, reverence and renunciation. In those days I was once and for all made proof against amateurish blundering, the follies of genius and the lure of fashion!" Thus gradually, through painting and music, he found his way to poetry; and in October 1862, to the surprise

Carl Spitteler. Zur Einführung in sein Schaffen, Jena, 1912, and by Robert Faesi, *Carl Spitteler, Eine Darstellung seiner dichterischen Persönlichkeit*, Zürich, 1915; in French, *Carl Spitteler et les sources de son génie épique*, by O. Kluth, Geneva, 1918. See also two articles in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, January and February, 1918 (pp. 421 ff. and 645 ff.) by G. Bianquis.

of his friend Widmann, he renounced the prospects of a career which painting was opening up to him, and resolved to be a poet. It seemed a foolish step, for Spitteler had no regular initiation into the art to which he would devote himself; and for three years he struggled with a drama on the subject of Saul, finally to cast it aside with the half consolation that, although the work had come to nothing, the labour on it was not lost. "Auf solchem Wege entsteht eine Persönlichkeit. Man ist nachher jemand."

From 1863 to 1865 Spitteler was a student of law in Basel, then, from 1865 to 1868, of theology at Zürich and Heidelberg. His life was visibly distraught in these years, until one day, under Burckhardt's guidance, he discovered Ariosto, and his literary life suddenly took shape. Ariosto was the key that unlocked his heart, Ariosto with his unbridled epic fantasy and resplendent colouring; here, if anywhere, poetry and painting joined hands. And an epic poet, a Swiss Ariosto, Spitteler resolved to be! Great plans were immediately laid, plans that included an epic on Herakles which was to have been his life-work; in later years he still thought of it as a poem that might have been a richer epic symphony than the *Olympische Frühling*. In the autumn of 1867 he went to Heidelberg, and on the evening of his arrival the plan of his first work, *Prometheus und Epimetheus*, took shape.

Meanwhile, however, his life in its practical aspects made shipwreck: he was not regarded as sufficiently orthodox to take his theological examination. Although subsequently admitted, and even invited to be pastor in Arosa, it was too late. Disheartened and disillusioned, he turned his back on his native land, and went to Russia, where, for eight years, he was a private tutor in the family of a Russian general. But his literary ambitions were not put aside; his grimly formed resolution remained untarnished, and in the long Russian nights his *Prometheus* was

composed. In 1879 his father died, and he returned to Switzerland; and in 1880-81—he was now thirty-five—his work, the work of thirteen years, was published, only to be completely ignored by the press in German-speaking lands. Not a word either of praise or blame! A less sturdy nature might well have accepted this as the last straw of disillusionment, and given up as folly the dream of literary distinction. He had spurned the conventional path to literary success and had verily reaped the reward. But failure only made him more grimly defiant than ever, stirred him to arms against the literary *canaille* of time-servers and log-rollers. He tried to win a footing in journalism, through six despairing years, years which have left their precipitate in the militant criticism of *Lachende Wahrheiten* (1898), where the laugh is often very bitter. Not indeed until Nietzsche—who had discovered in Spitteler something of a kindred nature and declared him to be the “finest of German æsthetic writers”—recommended him to the editor of the German periodical, *Die Kunstwart*, could he find a channel for his ideas. Germany would have nothing to say to him; and had it not been for Widmann’s faithful championship, he would have been equally ignored in his native land.

It was clear that he could not live by his pen, and for a short time he and Widmann kept a girls’ school. Amongst his scholars was a young girl of Dutch extraction, Marie op den Hoff, who became his wife in 1883. From 1881 to 1885 he held a mastership in a school at Neuveville on Lake Biel; but in the latter year the way was clear for a return, if not to literature, at least to journalism. He became editor of a local Basel newspaper, then was appointed to the regular staff of the *Basler Nachrichten*; and finally, from 1890 to 1892, he was editor of the feuilleton of the *Neue Züricher Zeitung*. In 1891, however, he inherited a small fortune, which made him independent; and since then he has lived with his

wife and two daughters in Lucerne. Meanwhile his fame, at last kindled in 1905 by the musical conductor Felix Weingartner, to whom *Prometheus* had been a revelation,¹ was rapidly spreading in Germany, and, had it not been for the war, would no doubt have reached an impressive culmination at the celebration of his seventieth birthday in 1915.

Spitteler's first published work, *Prometheus und Epimetheus : ein Gleichnis*, is without a predecessor in literature; unless we may claim Goethe's allegorical *Pandora* as a work of a kindred type. The reader who approaches it with classical preconceptions will find no satisfaction, for Spitteler's figures owe nothing but their names to antiquity. It is written in prose, a stately, Biblical prose, which again is without conspicuous analogues in German literature. The two brothers, Prometheus and Epimetheus, leave the common herd of men and settle in a lonely valley, shut off from all intercourse with their fellows. And after twelve years the angel of God bids men prepare to receive their king. The kingship is first offered to Prometheus, but on the condition that he "acquires a conscience", that he renounces his unlovely defiance of his fellow-men, that he yields his independence of soul. But Prometheus refuses; the gentler, weaker Epimetheus acquiesces, and is made a ruler of men; he is jubilantly accepted by the people, and the angel entrusts him with the keys of the lofty tower in which sleep the children of God, Mythos, Hiero, Messias, the promise of the future. But Epimetheus, weakly yielding to the blandishments of the Satanic powers, betrays his trust, and the children of God are slain.

Meanwhile Prometheus in sullen defiance goes up into a high mountain, to live in sole obedience to his own goddess, Soul; and that nothing may come between him and his high mistress, he destroys the young of his faithful dog and his lion—all but a single

¹ F. Weingartner, *Carl Spitteler, ein künstlerisches Erlebnis*, 2nd ed., Munich, 1913.

puppy—these being, doubtless, symbols of the hopes and despairs which bind man to his common humanity. While Epimetheus basks in the sunshine of popular favour, Prometheus passes with his faithful dog and lion—the one faithful in love, the other in hate—through the Valley of the Shadow, becomes a prey to inner dissension, misery and despair. At the behest of Doxa, God's angel makes his lot still bitterer, and he is again tempted to renounce his allegiance to the goddess Soul; but in the hour of his direst despair he hears the voice of his goddess and is strong. The lion becomes blind; sees his cubs come back to life, only to destroy them, and himself dies at Prometheus' feet, still full of the old hatred. On the body of his dead lion Prometheus vows that, if ever the ring of his high goddess breaks, he will himself take his life. His only companion is now his dog, already sick unto death; but before he dies, Prometheus tells him of the Dead Valley, where not merely death is to be found, but also life, and of Sophia and her sublime, life-giving wisdom. In his grim loneliness Prometheus has to make still another sacrifice; his stern mistress commands him to repudiate his brotherly love for Epimetheus.

The second part of the epic leads us still deeper into the mystic maze of allegory: the little thread of "story" disappears; but the poet's style has become freer, less artificially archaic: there is more promise of what is to come. Spitteler turns now to Epimetheus and shows his incapacity for ruling, his subjection to the instincts of the herd, the hollowness of his ambitions, and the final betrayal of his holy trust. New myths are introduced which open up fresh vistas. Most beautiful of all is the descent of Pandora to the world; Spitteler's epic genius is nowhere more convincing than when he is describing a journey; it may be only his own journey from Liestal to Bern as a child of three, or that of the children in *Mädchenfeinde* from Langenbruck to Solothurn,

or, as here, Pandora's, or the great progress of the gods from Erebus to Olympus—the epic touch is always present. Pandora comes down with her gift of happiness to mankind, but no one recognizes it, except a little child. The epic closes with Prometheus' great-hearted redemption of his erring brother, and their return to the old home in the valley. It is confessedly difficult to penetrate the heavy veil of allegory; at times the symbolism is childish, mediaevally transparent; and again, thought seems to be struggling vainly to find plastic expression. *Prometheus* is undoubtedly pessimistic, deeply pessimistic; but Spitteler's pessimism has even less of a philosophic, Schopenhauer-like stamp than that of Leopardi or Grillparzer, or of *Tristan und Isolde*; it is a purely subjective pessimism of balked personal aspiration. Prometheus is a new Pastor Brand, a symbol of the right of genius to be true to itself, even at the risk of anti-social anarchy. The greatest achievement of this age in German literature, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, owes not a little to Spitteler's *Prometheus*; the strong individualism and the contempt of the herd are definitely Nietzschean, and the lion and the dog remind one of Zarathustra's companions in his solitude, the serpent and the eagle; above all, Nietzsche has borrowed from his Swiss predecessor his stately beauty of language. But while Nietzsche is the thinker who seeks artistic symbols for ideas, Spitteler is, in the first instance, the artist who visualizes and creates. I doubt, however, whether even the reader of to-day, who has the benefit of a rapidly growing Spitteler literature, will get much beyond old Gottfried Keller's judgment of *Prometheus*: "What the poet wishes to say I do not know after reading his work twice; but in spite of all obscurity and indefiniteness I feel it all with him, feel the deep poetry that it contains." The veil is lifted a little in *Extramundana* (1883), a quite extraordinary work, in which, under the form of seven myths, the poet

wrestles once more with the baffling life-enigma. But, as Spitteler himself felt in later life, there was a danger here of his becoming inextricably entangled in the abstract and the abstruse.

Prometheus und Epimetheus was followed by a very varied literary production, a kind of tentative experimenting in almost every kind of literature. Poetry is represented by four little volumes: *Schmetterlinge* (1889), *Literarische Gleichnisse* (1892), *Balladen* (1896), *Glockenlieder* (1906). Only the first and the last are really lyric; Spitteler's ballads show a hankering after epic breadth, and his *Literarische Gleichnisse* harp rather persistently on the old problem of *Prometheus*. *Friedli, der Kolderi* (1891) and *Conrad der Leutnant* (1898), are prose stories of a more or less objective type—the latter, indeed, an experiment in Franco-Russian realism. Other stories, *Gustav* (1892) and *Imago* (1906), are definitely autobiographical. Spitteler always despised the novel, and it would seem as if his contempt had reflected back upon him. There is a surprising lack of distinction, both in the form and style of his stories; it makes one think of an actor who excels in impersonating heroic rôles, but fails when he has to present ordinary, everyday people. I do not even except *Imago*, to which writers on Spitteler ascribe particular importance. It is a story of the return of the native—no doubt, Spitteler's own return from Russia—and his disenchantment when he finds again the love he had idealized in his exile; but there is too much abstraction in Spitteler's treatment of the theme; his heroine is rather a repetition of the goddess Soul in *Prometheus* than a creature of flesh and blood. Not merely does one miss reality in the novel: there is a lack of passion, even idealized passion, in it. Goethe once deplored that the German poet Platen escaped greatness by his want of love. There might be some justification in applying this stricture to Spitteler: he is no love-poet; his lyric poems rarely deal with erotic emotions;

and the wooing of Hera in the *Olympische Frühling* is a very loveless affair. Of all Spitteler's prose works my preference goes to *Mädchenfeinde* (1907, but written much earlier),¹ a delightfully fresh little story which opens up wide vistas, although it only tells about three schoolchildren.

In 1900 Spitteler inaugurated the twentieth century with the first volume of his *Olympischer Frühling*; the second volume appeared in 1906; and the whole poem, remodelled, in 1910. It is an epic in five books, thirty-three cantos and between eighteen and nineteen thousand lines. Here, as in his previous works, he deliberately flouted his public, one might say; for who wanted to read an epic in the twentieth century? The epic, he was told on every side, was dead; to attempt to revive it as a vehicle of serious poetic thought, was merely putting back the hands of the clock.² But Spitteler has sinned more grievously than in the mere choice of an unpopular form of poetry; he, a modern poet, has made his theme the gods of Greece. Wagner, it is true, had made the gods of the north popular by grafting on them a very modern philosophy; but Greek mythology—that was merely going back to an effete classicism! And to crown all: Spitteler has written his epic in a six-foot rhyming verse which only differs from the alexandrine in the freedom of its caesura; and that more than a hundred years after Goethe and Schiller had agreed that the alexandrine, with its recurrent jingle, was an impossible thing in German! Thus, taken all in all, it would have been difficult to conceive anything less likely to catch the ear of the public. But the *Olympische Frühling* could not be ignored as *Prometheus* had been, and in the course of these twenty years steadily

¹ Recently translated into English by the Viscountess de Roquette-Buisson, as *Two Little Misogynists*, New York, 1922.

² See Spitteler's brief essay, "Das verbotene Epos", in *Lachende Wahrheiten*, Leipzig, 1898, pp. 59 ff., which might well serve as a preface to his epic. On the poem itself, cp. R. Messleny, *Karl Spitteler und das neudeutsche Epos* (*Deutsche Erzählungskunst*, I), Halle, 1918, and Paul Lang, *Carl Spittelers Olympischer Frühling*, Olten, 1920.

widening circles, not restricted to Germany and Switzerland, have fallen under its spell.

The kingdom of Kronos has been overthrown. Ananke, "der gezwungene Zwang," whom Spitteler boldly conceives as masculine—a ruthless automaton in an iron mask, the ultimate power, the last instance in the poets' cosmogony—has issued a *fiat* that a new dynasty of gods shall be established in Kronos' place. These gods slumber as yet in the depths of Erebos, unconscious of the high destiny that awaits them. Hades, the king of the underworld, awakens them with difficulty, and announces to them the decree of the Eternal Necessity. The sleep-sodden gods rub their eyes and prepare for the journey to Olympos. And this journey, *Die Auffahrt*, is the theme of the first book of the epic. A more grandiose pilgrimage the literature of the world has not to show. With unflagging interest, with inexhaustible variety, through a wonderland which is, after all, only Spitteler's own splendid Alpine land, we are shown the new gods wending their way to the upper world and the sun. And what a real, living company they are! The future rulers of the world are no shadows of the classical tradition, no marble museum-gods, but, as has been well said, have a considerable strain of Swiss peasant blood in their veins. On their way upwards they fall in with Kronos, the dispossessed, who resolves to make one more attempt to regain his throne, only to be hurled into the abyss by an avalanche of stones. In the upper world the new gods are received by Hebe, who leads them to the castle of Uranos, from which they pass to Olympos.

The second book of the epic, *Hera die Braut*, deals with the wooing of Hera, an Amazonian Brunhilda rather than a Juno. She falls, not to the victorious Apollo, but by the intrigue of Ananke and his daughter Gorgo, to the unscrupulous Zeus, who thus becomes the head of the new dynasty. With the attainment of Olympos and the establishment of Zeus on his

throne, epic progress ceases ; it must cease, for there is nothing more to happen, unless the poet were to go beyond the Olympic spring-time and follow his gods to a "Götterdämmerung". *Die hohe Zeit*, the third book, is as the calm after the storm : a festival of peace. In its variety and sheer beauty, in its range of sentiment and emotion, from the sunniest humour and optimism to the most tragic pessimism, this is undoubtedly the most attractive part of the epic. It may be that the term epic becomes something of a misnomer, judged by the old canon of "literary kinds" ; but the modern reader is hardly likely to cavil with Spitteler for his neglect of rules. This third book is a series of episodes. Delightful in its buoyant humour and fancy is the expedition of the winds, which Boreas leads down to the earth in search of booty ; the portrait of Poseidon might have—as it no doubt did—come straight from a picture of Böcklin's such as *Spiel der Wellen* ; the love of Hylas for the nymph Kaleidusa is a veritable cobweb of delicate lyric fantasy ; and Ariosto himself has conceived no more romantic adventure than that of Hermes and Pelarg in the Mountain of Silence. Finest of all in its subtle symbolism is perhaps the flight of Apollo and Artemis to the land of Metakosmos, the Realm of Art. In all these exuberant adventures of the new rulers of Olympos they have been forbidden to enter the world of men ; but Aphrodite (whom Spitteler, by the way, treats with scant reverence) conscious of her fascinations for the lower world, crosses the forbidden boundary, and Ananke decrees that the playtime of the gods is at an end (*Der hohen Zeit Ende*). He awakens Zeus to a sense of his high responsibilities as chosen ruler : stirs up discord between Zeus and Hera, who is no immortal like her spouse, and whose parleyings with the grotesque figure of Death, and visit, under Death's guidance, to the great Machine of Necessity, introduce some of the most sombre notes in the

poem. Zeus, disappointed in mankind, will avenge himself on it; but again Ananke interposes. Finally in the last book, *Zeus*, the ruler of the gods finds consolation in his son Herakles, a man after his own heart, a fighter against tyranny, cowardice and deceit, an analogue to Wagner's Jung-Siegfried. Zeus sends down Herakles—a symbol of the new humanity—on a mission to the world; and Herakles, under the shadow of his mother's curse of mortality, accepts the mission with a brave and defiant heart. Thus this extraordinary epic, which is overshadowed by the fatalism of an Ananke-governed universe, closes on a note of hopefulness:

Mut sei mein Wahlspruch bis zum letzten Atemzug!
 Mein Herz heisst "Dennoch". Herakles bedarf nicht Dank;
 Auch mit verhärmten Wangen geht sichs ohne Wank.
 Genug, dass über meinem Blick der Himmel steht;
 Getrost, dass eines Gottes Odem mich umweht.
 Und wenn im Spiegel Torheit mich und Schwächen grüssen,
 Ich nehms in Kauf; was tuts? man wird es eben büssen.
 Dummheit, ich reizte dich! Bosheit, heran zum Streit!
 Lass sehen, wer da bändigt, welchen Zeus geweiht!¹

With each succeeding book, Spitteler's mastery over his art becomes more assured, his flights of fancy more daring, his humour subtler; with a Böcklin-like lavishness he empties his palette on his imagined world—imagined, and yet in its landscape background strangely true. It has been pointed out that the nature which the poet describes is—except in the first part, when he goes to the high Alps—that of the Jura, with which he was most familiar. Wonderful, too, is the skill with which he adapts his naturally monotonous metre to the varying moods of his narrative;

¹ "Let courage be my motto to my last breath! 'Nevertheless' is the name my heart bears. Herakles needs no thanks; even with haggard cheeks there is no finching. Enough that above my range of vision the heavens stand; my consolation that a god's breath envelops me. And if folly and weaknesses beckon to me from the mirror, I take it all as it comes. What boots it? One can but pay the penalty. Stupidity, I challenge thee! Malice, on to the fight! Let's see who'll master him whom Zeus hath sanctified!"

and his racy Swiss dialect-words, which must often send a foreign reader in despair to the Swiss *Idiotikon*, stimulate like the breath of his own mountain air. Occasionally Spitteler even allows himself forcible neologisms and violations of the German tongue itself. But the quality I would place highest in his work is its extraordinary plasticity: everything is visualized, not mentally constructed; his gods are created, not merely described; this is a quality absent in none of the great epics. He has an extraordinary genius, too, for converting the most commonplace of individual experiences—and his imagery more often than not goes back to impressions of his earliest childhood—into sublime world-happenings. The terrible machine of necessity, for instance, was the child's first impression of a spinning-loom, and the Homeric battle of Ajax with the Giants a memory of the rough labourers in his uncle's brewery. Spitteler himself tells us: "The cherry-tree of Aphrodite, the walnut-tree of Pandora, the grass of Baldur, the corn of Noontide grew on my grandfather's fields. They have stood the transference well, even to Olympus."

The Gods of Greece have often passed across the stage of Northern literatures. In the seventeenth century they masqueraded in German poetry, like strange, uncouth ghosts, with grotesquely Germanized names; in the great eighteenth century, after a temporary eclipse by the rival gods of the Germanic north, they ruled over a placid world of beauty and humanity; even in the age of ascendant romanticism they were no strangers, and readers of the Scandinavian literatures will recall incongruous blendings of the race of Odin with that of Zeus, or, at a later date, noble visions of the old cosmogony conjured up by Paludan-Müller in Denmark and Rydberg in Sweden. In German poetry one seems to see the passing of the old gods in Heine's poetry of the North Sea and in his unforgettable vision in the *Reisebilder*, where they fade

away before the pale, bloodstained Jew, who throws down His Cross on the high banquet-table of Olympus. But here, in this poem of the twentieth century, they return again to the Western world: return, not as the stately gods of Winckelmann's colourless antiquarianism, or the guardians of the placid beauty of Goethe and Schiller's classicism, but as very living humanized beings—impetuous, humorous, naïvely happy, naïvely cruel, less often wise than cunning. They come burdened with the heritage of a whole century of European pessimism, and yet ready to face the future with a jubilant optimism and a prophetic joy. The Gods of Greece do not die: "sie sind ewig, denn sie sind."

It is for later generations to grasp the true proportions and significance of this work, to appreciate it at its final value; we are still too near to it. In an address a few years ago on Gottfried Keller, Spitteler, dwelling on Keller's slow recognition, spoke of twenty-five years as the period it takes for a new work of genius to "win through". "Ein gutes Buch," said Keller himself, "frisst sich schliesslich durch" ("A good book in the end eats its way through"). But alas, in so many cases, before the twenty-five years' waiting is over, the creator himself is beneath the sod. In this Spitteler, in spite of all the adverse fortune that has dogged him, must be deemed fortunate: he has come into his own in his lifetime. To many Spitteler has long been regarded as a kind of sleeping Barbarossa, who would some day awaken to assume the unclaimed sceptre in German poetry; others, again, confidently proclaim the *Olympische Frühling* a "Divine Comedy" of the new century. It is for the future to decide. Meanwhile it is certainly no exaggeration to say that the literature of the German tongue and the literature of Europe have no more grandiose, no stronger poetic work to show in the new century than this wonderful epic.

GOTTHOLD EPHRAIM LESSING

(Born January 22nd, 1729)

Read February 20th, 1929

TO let the occasion of the two hundredth birthday of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing pass uncommemorated in England would be unjust and ungrateful, for he has always stood in high honour amongst us. He has never, I believe, had detractors here ; no one has ever questioned his greatness ; he has no qualities of mind or character which, so to speak, go against the grain with us. We cannot accuse him, as we used to accuse Goethe, of an egocentric self-culture ; nor can we say that his dramas have been kept off our stage, as Schiller's have been, by a rhetorical idealism little to Anglo-Saxon tastes. We have never in our complacently superior English way said of Lessing : "How very German." On the contrary we have often been moved to reflect on how strangely English, how remarkably French he can be. This is not necessarily a compliment to him, but it does mean that we recognize in him a writer and thinker who rose above the narrower limitations of nationalism. Lessing was, if ever there was one, a "good European"—a good European and a great European in the spacious eighteenth century.

Lessing—let me first review briefly his life—was born two hundred years ago, on January 22nd, 1729,

is all but Slavonic. And possibly in some distant degree there was an infiltration of Slavonic blood in Lessing's veins: it is suggested, indeed, by his name.

He had the advantage which the young Saxons of that age enjoyed over the rest of Germany, of being educated in one of the great "Fürstenschulen" or public schools of Saxony—in that of St Afra, in Meissen. Thence he passed with the best credentials to the University of Leipzig, to be moulded into a pastor like his father. But the Powers had other designs with him. Gottsched, the pompous dictator of the German Parnassus, had just then opened up to the brighter young spirits at the University of Leipzig luring prospects of making a living with their pens; and literature soon came to mean more to young Lessing than theology—or medicine, to which he subsequently turned; the theatre more to him than the lecture-room. In an effusive moment he even aspired to be the German Molière. But the critical vein in Lessing was always stronger than the creative; and before long we find him as a struggling *littérateur* in the Berlin of Frederick the Great, no longer aspiring to be Germany's Molière, but rather emulating the brightest star in the European firmament of his time, Voltaire. The literary life was an infinitely hard struggle in those days, especially in Prussia, with a monarch who was not to be convinced that anything good could come out of his own people. With the real Voltaire basking in the royal sunshine at Potsdam, there was no room for any merely German aspirant to a share in Frederick the Great's favour. But young Lessing kept his head bravely above water. He toiled like any literary hack, reviewing books, translating, doing, in fact, anything in the writing way that fell to his hand; and yet amidst it ~~all he never felt in the~~

In this hard school his mind and character were being tempered to steel; his critical genius commanded every day more respect and inspired more fear. He made friends with the noble Jew Moses Mendelssohn, and the shallow, if not unsympathetic, Nicolai, and the sensitive poet of *Der Frühlings*, Ewald von Kleist. And he made enemies, for all his life long Lessing was more successful in making enemies than friends. The review, *Briefe, die Literatur betreffend*, which he, Mendelssohn and Nicolai established, marked an epoch in German criticism. Here Lessing came to grips with the classical aesthetic dogmas, and he rationalized, consolidated and at the same time widened them. And soon there rose before him the vision of a higher and truer classicism than his century had yet caught a glimpse of. At the hand of that ancient Greek born out of his time, Winckelmann, Lessing found his way back through the mirage of pseudo-classicism to the fountain-head of all classic beauty, Greece. Just as before Lessing's criticism the shallow pseudo-scholarship of the eighteenth century had gone down, so now came the turn of its false classicism. His clear and finely balanced brain conceived the *Laokoon*; and that work, with its subtle discrimination of aesthetic functions, prepared the way for a new literature and a new art.

Meanwhile Lessing's life had known many ups and downs, the downs being much more frequent than the ups. He was a man of thirty-seven, and had not yet succeeded in making a reasonable livelihood with his pen. Now, however, came a period of comparative freedom from money cares; he obtained the appointment of secretary to the governing general at Breslau; and in spite of nights spent in the questionable excitement of the gambling table, he was able to write here that masterpiece of German comedy, his *Minna*

nothing to do ; no one would hire me, doubtless because no one knew how to make use of me." When he was ultimately hired, it was to enter the service of his old mistress the theatre. It was, however, no very luring prospect that was offered him in Hamburg. It was not he who was chosen to be a director of the first German National Theatre ; he was not even asked to help in its management. The duties which the Hamburg "Consortium" had in view for him were to comment on the performances of the theatre in a newspaper which should appear two or three times a week—in modern parlance, to act as a kind of publicity agent. How badly Lessing fulfilled this function we all know ; how he declined to praise the work of the theatre and the pieces it produced, declined to laud indiscriminately the actors—in fact, he did everything that he was not wanted to do. But we also know that, in failing to come up to the expectations that were placed on him, he produced the great text-book of the eighteenth-century theatre, the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*.

When the Hamburg enterprise came to grief, as it richly deserved to do, Lessing was again without an occupation. Ultimately the little ducal town of Wolfenbüttel took pity on him, and made him its librarian, which modest post he occupied until he died on February 15th, 1781.

There was little enough sunshine in Lessing's life. We may lament the fate that kept the sunshine out ; but we have to admit that he was himself largely responsible for the lack of it. No sooner, for instance, was he securely ensconced in the congenial and sheltered quiet of his Wolfenbüttel library, than he stirred up strife once more by offending, and then attacking, the powerful and many-headed monster of Lutheran orthodoxy, thereby bringing down upon himself greater storms than ever before. ~~His head~~

from them no laurel-crowned victor, but scarred and wounded, battered and defeated. And yet once again, out of the darkness, as it was with all Lessing's seeming failures, came light. From the bitter strife emerged clear and pure that great paean of eighteenth-century humanity and enlightenment, the noble appeal for what always lay nearest to Lessing's heart: tolerance, freedom of thought—his *Nathan der Weise*.

Lessing's life went down in a lurid and stormy sunset. This life of perpetual battle was battle to the last. And not merely battle, but also sorrow and bereavement; for his last years were darkened by a deep and tragic personal shadow. Late in life he found a helpmate in Eva König, the widow of a Hamburg friend. But Lessing, who had never been content to take the world as he found it, who had never seen it with the simple optimism of his century as the best of all possible worlds, was not to be vouchsafed the privilege of being merely happy. Within a year Eva König was dead—dead in child-bed, and with her the little son in whom Lessing saw the symbol of a visible personal immortality. Thus the curtain was rung down for ever on any hope of his attaining the ordinary human happiness of ordinary folk.

Lessing was always a fighter, a great soldier—to use Heine's phrase—in the liberation war of humanity. And his fighting meant more for his people than he knew. When he died in 1781, the Germans had already to their credit mighty achievements of the spirit which Lessing's dimmed eyes were but imperfectly able to appreciate: 1781, in particular, was a great year in Germany's spiritual history: the year of Schiller's *Räuber*, and of that lordliest palace of the human intellect, the *Critique of Pure Reason*. But this is certain: without Lessing, Germany would not have stood where she did.

In a survey of Lessing's manifold life and activities, three aspects stand out conspicuously:

his contribution to the national drama of his country ; his work as a critic and theorist of poetry and the arts ; and his battles with the theologians. I place Lessing's work as a dramatist first ; for there is, I think, a tendency among his biographers unduly to depreciate its significance, to the greater glory of Lessing the critic.

In a famous and often quoted passage in his *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* Lessing had declared, "I am neither an actor nor a poet. It is true, people have often done me the honour of declaring me to be the latter. But only because they have not understood me. From the few dramatic attempts which I have made, such generous conclusions ought not to be drawn. My earliest attempts were made in years when one likes to regard pleasure and ease in writing as genius. What in my later works is tolerable, I am confident I owe solely to criticism. I have not in me the living spring which works its way up by its own force, by its own force gushes forth in rich, fresh and pure streams ; I have to bring everything out of me by pressure, and, as it were, through pipes. I should be so poor, so cold, so short-sighted, had I not in some degree learned to borrow modestly from the treasures of others, to warm myself at others' fires, to strengthen my eye with the glasses of art."

Lessing himself had spoken ; and the world believed his words and re-echoed them : that Lessing was no poet has been told us again and again in the biographies and literary histories of a century and a half. His shortcomings as a dramatist ; his all too calculated and mechanical perfection of plot ; his "dramatic algebra" and the brilliant antithetic "Lessingisieren" of his dialogue ; his extensive indebtedness to, not to say pilferings from other dramatists—these are the accusations that have been freely brought against him. But surely with very great injustice. I cannot think that they would

ever have been brought with such conviction had not Lessing himself made that fatal admission that he was "no poet". It is true, Lessing was no "naïve" poet in the sense established by Schiller; his imagination never took the reins into its own hands, freed itself from the schoolmastering of the reason, as it must do in all great poetry. It is true also that he owes many a debt to the dramatic literature of England, France and Italy, with which he had a greater familiarity than any other man of his time. But Lessing was never a plagiarist, not even in those early dramas written in his Leipzig and Berlin days, when he was a disciple of Destouches, Marivaux and Nivelle de la Chaussée; and his dramatic dialogue in his masterpieces need not fear comparison with the best of his century.

With his *Miss Sara Sampson* in 1755 Lessing achieved what might be called without prejudice the doughtiest deed that has ever been done for the national theatre of Germany. For with that play he established on the German stage the English "tragedy of common life"; and to the tragedy of common life Germany was never subsequently to prove faithless. It is, I believe, the form of drama in which she has made her greatest contributions to the literary treasure-house of the European theatre, and perhaps her most national form of tragedy. *Miss Sara Sampson* is ostensibly an English play; its scene is in England, and its people are English men and women. These come largely from the English novel, especially from Richardson: there is much of *Clarissa* in the unhappy Sara. Nor had Lessing forgotten his Congreve, from whom he borrowed the names of most of his characters. But the foundation and inspiration of *Miss Sara Sampson* are to be sought, as an American scholar has recently been showing us, in more obscure English dramatic works, in *The Squire of Alsatia*, by Thomas Shadwell, and the *Caelia* of Charles Johnson. Thus the statement of the literary histories that

Lessing's play was suggested by Lillo's *Merchant of London* is erroneous; there are many English ingredients in it, but none of these was supplied by Lillo. The England, however, in whose debt Lessing stood, was the England of his own time; Lessing had as yet no real grasp of the fact that back in a remoter romantic past lay a vast dramatic poetry in England which dwarfed to insignificance the punier playwrights of his own day. Shakespeare was to Lessing still little more than the primitive barbarian with whom Voltaire had acquainted him.

Lessing's next play was *Minna von Barnhelm*, which saw the light in 1767. That *Minna von Barnhelm* is one of the greatest of German comedies no one has ever ventured to question. There is, of course, much in it that is mouldy and old-fashioned now; our twentieth century has difficulty in accepting its lachrymose sentiment, its all too large-hearted effusiveness. But the people of "Minna" are living people—these soldiers of the Seven Years' War, this innkeeper; Minna herself, the delightful Franziska, before whom the long procession of clever waiting-maids of French comedy pale to unsubstantial shadows. All these people have red corpuscles in their blood; they live the abiding life of great creations. *Minna von Barnhelm*, like *Miss Sara Sampson*, owes a great debt to us. Here, and for the only time as a practical dramatist, Lessing pays material homage to Shakespeare's art. No English reader can but feel that in Minna and her maid there is a reflection of the grace and charm of our Portia and Nerissa; and the *dénouement* of Lessing's comedy has clearly been planned with that of *The Merchant of Venice* in mind. But Shakespeare represents the lesser of Lessing's indebtedness to English literature. He had now discovered a new English dramatist nearer to his own time, who was to mean more for the real progress of the European drama than the mediocre Lillo, and more than all the brilliant dialecticians of

the Restoration comedy—George Farquhar. Farquhar was the first modern dramatist, not merely, as has been said of him, to bring the scent of the hay across the footlights, but also to put on the stage real soldiers, beside whom the Bramarbases of the traditional comedy are but as spouting automata. Farquhar's *Constant Couple*, and still more, his *Beaux' Stratagem*, meant more for *Minna von Barnhelm* than any other model; and the place of Lessing's drama in the literature of the eighteenth century is by the side, not of the great French comedies of the century, but of *The Beaux' Stratagem*, *She Stoops to Conquer* and *The School for Scandal*. The greatness of *Minna von Barnhelm* has always been recognized, not so frequently the fact that its greatness is of the English kind.

Lessing wrote two other dramatic masterpieces: *Emilia Galotti* and *Nathan der Weise*. With the former of these the German tragedy of common life made a vast stride forward. Here, again, more than one English drama on the theme of the Roman Virginia—for such is *Emilia Galotti*—had stood sponsor; but Lessing rose superior to them all. For he discarded the political theses which the English playwrights had woven into their interpretations of the Roman tragedy, and contented himself with depicting a simple conflict of human emotions. The critics have dwelt on the flaws of Lessing's attempt to modernize the Virginia story, but these flaws were inherent in the theme from the beginning; they have not dwelt sufficiently on the skill and intuition with which he has in very large measure surmounted his difficulties and brought his theme within the sphere of eighteenth-century sympathies; they have not always appreciated the dramatic vigour and strength with which the men and women are depicted, who here play out their fates. *Emilia Galotti* is, again, one of the foundation-stones of the modern German theatre.

And finally, *Nathan der Weise*, Lessing's swan song, the poetic precipitate of his battle for tolerance and humanity. An older generation condemned *Nathan der Weise* as merely a drama for the closet; but they could not envisage those subsequent developments of the drama in which the bustle of Romantic happenings was more and more to give place to psychological conflicts. In this sense Lessing's last drama has much in it that was before its time. If it has, in spite of this, still remained in large measure excluded from the stage, the reason is that it turns upon a motive which was congenial to the taste of the eighteenth century—as witness Voltaire and Diderot—but is no longer to ours, namely, the discovery that two lovers are brother and sister. Such a disillusioning *dénouement* a post-romantic public could not accept with equanimity; and *Nathan der Weise* has remained unpalatable in the theatre. It is also, admittedly, somewhat artificially constructed to enforce the doctrine which was nearer to Lessing's heart than the fortunes of his characters, clear-cut, interesting and even humorous as they are. *Nathan der Weise* is primarily a sermon on religious tolerance, not a drama of the emotions. Deeply significant is another aspect of Lessing's last dramatic work; here he has turned away from our Shakespeare, for whom he had as a critic broken a lance, and followed that writer among his contemporaries to whom he owed his chief debt—Diderot. Nay, more, he has bent the knee to his arch-enemy Voltaire, and written a drama whose place is with the dramas of the great Frenchman whose life, like Lessing's, was one long battle for the liberation of humanity.

Lessing as a critic requires no eulogy or apology. Did not Macaulay, in the middle of the last century, greet him as the “greatest critic of Europe”? Lessing's eminence as a critic has never been disputed; the trenchant vigour of his judgments, his brilliant style, his keen dialectic fencing, above all, his freedom from the fogs of metaphysical confusion which so

often beset the German mind—these qualities have always been recognized. I need not dwell on his masterly estimates of men and books, even of such as lay outside his normal personal sympathy ; and the crushing irony with which he wiped out the bunglers of literature. His two greatest critical works are the *Laokoon* and the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*. The first of these is a milestone in the development of eighteenth-century aesthetic thinking. Building on ideas of Marmontel and Diderot, he, for the first time, differentiated clearly the arts according to their aims and functions : pigeon-holed, as it were, the activities of the imagination. The pity of it is that, instead of giving us a finished treatise, he has left us only a collection of materials for such a treatise. Moreover, the *Laokoon* means something different to us to-day than it did to its own time. Then it was regarded—and rightly regarded—as a protest against excessive inroads of the poet on the province of the painter and sculptor. For us of a post-romantic age this delimitation has lost its force ; the modern art of Europe has largely repudiated Lessing's teaching, and sought to associate rather than dissociate the arts. But as a monument of acute aesthetic thinking and classic style the *Laokoon* has not yet grown effete.

Lessing's other great contribution to aesthetic theory, his *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, was, as we have seen, merely a critical newspaper dealing with the mediocre repertory and hardly less mediocre performances of an actor-ridden theatre, in which an artistic conscience was not conspicuous. But the very poverty of his materials gave Lessing his opportunity ; he was forced to discuss general questions because the particular ones were not worth discussing. It has often been said that the pivot round which the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* turns is the *Poetics* of Aristotle. I do not think so. The central figure of Lessing's treatise is Voltaire ; the *Dramaturgie* is one long polemic against Voltaire and all that the pseudo-classicism of France

involved ; against the hampering limitations of the *tragédie classique*. It is true Lessing does in his faith on Aristotle, declaring him as much an enunciator of eternal verities as Euclid himself. But Aristotle is only a means to an end, and that end is the demolition of French Classic tragedy. In his actual interpretation of Aristotle Lessing is not always fortunate ; in fact, he is more often wrong than right ; and when he is right, as in his attack on the French unities as being contrary to the spirit and teaching of Aristotle, or when he substitutes "fear" for "terror" in the translation of the Aristotelian definition of tragedy, he was no innovator. But even when he expresses views that had been put forward before him, he does so with such vigour and brilliance that they appear as new truths. The virtue of the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* is not in what it says, but in the way it says it.

To us it has always been a source of pride, and one reason why we have taken Lessing to our hearts, that he boldly maintained that our Shakespeare was, in spirit, a truer Aristotelian than the great poets of France, who plumed themselves on their obedience to Aristotle's laws. We prize Lessing's treatise especially as a monument to the greatness of Shakespeare. But is there not something of a fallacy here ? Was Lessing really the whole-hearted admirer of Shakespeare we like to believe he was ? If you will gather together all the passages in the *Dramaturgie* where Shakespeare is mentioned, I think you will be surprised to find how very little Lessing has to say about him. The Hamburg theatre gave him, of course, no opportunity of criticizing a Shakespearian play ; the time was not yet ripe for Shakespeare to be played in Germany ; and I am sure Lessing would have been the last to counsel so hazardous an experiment. Thus Shakespeare is never discussed for himself alone ; to be quite honest, he is mostly used merely as a cudgel wherewith to belabour the arch-enemy Voltaire. It was a triumph for Lessing's irony to

show that the French poet, compared with the English "drunken savage", was the veriest bungler! It may seem a tribute to Lessing's acumen that he should have proclaimed Shakespeare a more faithful observer of the Aristotelian law than Corneille; but far would it have been from him to maintain, as we might maintain to-day, that Aristotle is a great critic of the drama, because his theory is sufficiently elastic to allow of the admission of Shakespeare. In Lessing's eyes Shakespeare is to be praised because he can be proved to be a classic poet, the "brother of Sophocles". For Lessing is a "classic" critic; he had not a drop in his blood of that romanticism which first found the key to Shakespeare's heart. The quality whereby he towers above the other classic critics of his century lies in the nature of his classicism; he did not take his stand, like Boileau, on the baroque interpretation of the antique initiated by Italy and France, but went back to the eternal sources of classicism in Greece. He adapted the classic dogma to the spirit of his time, and by widening it and ennobling it, destroyed pseudo-classicism. To such a mind Shakespeare's works must necessarily have contained much that was anti-pathetic; and the best proof of it is that Shakespeare meant, as we have seen, so little for his own dramatic work. Much in the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* is devoid of interest—other than a historical one—for us to-day; it has long been discarded as a book of study in German schools. But it is a notable monument of eighteenth-century aesthetic thought, the greatest text-book of the theatre of that century.

Much might be said of Lessing's theological controversies, his sanguinary tussles with Pastor Goeze and the champions of Lutheran orthodoxy. But these too, are battles of long ago, and awaken but a faint echo in the twentieth-century mind. What this great rationalist fought for—tolerance, freedom of thought and conscience—has long passed into the common-places of our intellectual and spiritual life. But we

must not forget that we are the heirs of that freedom which Lessing and men like him won for us. And the manner of Lessing's fighting must always awaken our admiration for him. He went into battle as a St. George of undaunted courage to fight the dragon, to free the languishing human spirit; and more often than not he fought a lone hand against obscurantism, uncleanness, insincerity and hypocrisy. Like most brave fighters, however, he came to love the joy of battle for its own sake; to him, too, might be applied the words he quotes about Aristotle: "*Solet quaerere pugnam in suis libris*". He was not always fair to his adversaries; once his holy wrath was kindled, he was relentless—relentless to his first master Gottsched, relentless to his great exemplar Voltaire, and relentless, albeit with greater justice, to Klotz and Goeze. And he was not always fair to his friends. In his onslaught on the baroque pseudo-classicism, he sometimes forgot that all literature is necessarily built upon conventions that are not, and never can be life, and that of no poet may it be demanded that he should repudiate the particular convention of the age into which he is born; a great art is always possible even within the most artificial of conventions. Lessing was unjust to the great poets of France because he attacked the convention they had perforce to obey, instead of endeavouring to appreciate the art and skill with which they achieved what their age demanded of them and thereby fulfilled their poetic mission. But again, we must measure these things by their ultimate results, and not allow ourselves to be blinded by temporary injustices. Had Lessing been fairer to his enemies, more appreciative of the good side of the doctrines he impugned, he would assuredly not have achieved his great work for the advancement and freedom of the human spirit. That is what matters in the end.

On this, the two hundredth anniversary of his birth, we can still speak of Lessing as a man to whom our

whole-hearted admiration and sympathy go out ; he was a great dramatist, a wise critic, an honest and honourable man of letters—one of the intellectual giants of his century. Moreover—and I cannot do better than turn here to our first great interpreter of German literature, Carlyle—"it is to Lessing that an Englishman would turn with readiest affection. As a poet, as a critic, philosopher, or controversialist, his style will be found precisely such as we of England are accustomed to admire most : brief, nervous, vivid ; yet quiet, without glitter or antithesis ; idiomatic, pure without purism, transparent, yet full of character and reflex hues of meaning. He stands before us like a toilsome, but unwearied and heroic champion, earning not the conquest but the battle."

THE GODS OF GREECE IN GERMAN POETRY

THE theme which I have chosen for the present lecture obviously far transcends the compass of a single hour. Were I to justify the promise of my title, and attempt to deal conscientiously with the changing aspects of the Greek gods as they emerge at various stages in the evolution of northern poetry, not one, but a long series of lectures would be necessary. In fact, it has been a little disheartening to me to review the vast field and realize how very little of it I can afford to cover.¹ For it is a field full of endless unsolved problems, of broken ends which one's fingers itch to try to link up. Were we to begin at the beginning, we might study the bewildered *naïveté*—or rather, a *naïveté* that is hardly self-conscious enough to be bewildered—with which mediaeval poets like Heinrich von Veldeke and the German chroniclers of the story of Troy present, in very human terms, the divine personalities of the ancient epics; here the old gods are little more than the knights and ladies of chivalric romance. Or we might watch, in the following centuries, how flashes of southern beauty tinge the northern fantasy, and how the Greek mythology begins to temper with finer nuances the stern dualism of naïve joy and austere asceticism of mediaeval poetry. It would be interesting, too, had we time, to investigate the fortuitous courses by which this new knowledge trickled into

¹ An old book viewing the theme in its widest aspects, and still not unreadable, is C. L. Cholevius, *Geschichte der deutschen Poesie nach ihren antiken Elementen*, 2 vols., Leipzig, 1854-6. The modern reader can have no better guide, as far as the important part of the subject is concerned, than F. Strich's admirable work, *Die Mythologie in der deutschen Literatur von Klopstock bis Wagner*, 2 vols., Halle, 1910.

the German mind. You might expect me again—and with more justice—to linger on the Renaissance period, when unequivocal and sometimes even dazzling light spread from the south of Europe; but I doubt whether this would be profitable for the point of view which I particularly wish to lay before you. The Renaissance brought a kind of intoxication to the German mind; but there was no question of a real assimilation of the spirit of antiquity; else the literature of that age would not so soon have degenerated into dull and lifeless imitation. To the German sixteenth century, intensely preoccupied as it was with its own spiritual problems, the discovery of the ancient world was still a matter of comparative indifference. It might be well enough for humanistic scholars, who had, so to speak, divested themselves of their nationality by writing in Latin, to interest themselves in it; but Luther's Germany had more immediately vital things to think about. At most, the German poets employed, not very intelligently, and as a kind of stucco ornament, the mythological imagery which the humanists had introduced; for the serenity of the ancient mind they had, and could have had no comprehension. To Hans Sachs, for instance, the gods of Greece, when he set them on his primitive stage, were just as plain and simple Nuremberg citizens as any other figures in his plays—as our Christian God himself.¹ And think of the Lutheran bigotry with which the old *Faust-book* views its hero's dealings with the heathen past; to its unknown author "Helen of Troy" is indeed the Scarlet Woman. When we turn to the real age of Renaissance poetry in Germany, the baroque seventeenth century, we find ourselves no whit nearer an understanding of the beauty of Greece. Opitz may discourse, with an irony born of intimate acquaintance, of the deeds of

¹ e.g. *Comedia, darin die göttin Pallas die tugend und die göttin Venus die wollust verfielt* (1530); *Ein comedi, das judicium Paridis* (1532); *Comedia oder Kampff-gesprech zwischen Juppiter und Juno* (1534); *Ein gesprech der götter*, etc. (1544).

Krieges-Gott Mars, or, in the footsteps of his master Heinsius, sing the praises of Bacchus ; but of any real conception of what a later age was to call Hellenism there is nothing. Moreover, in his attitude to the antique, he merely struts a daw in Dutch feathers. It is not easy for us to interest ourselves in the Jupiters and Venuses, who stud so familiarly and with so promiscuous a blending of ancient and Christian morals, the dusty alexandrine verse of the seventeenth century ; and we cannot but smile at a zealous linguistic purist like Zesen, who tried to acclimatize the gods of Greece by Germanizing their names. When Mars and Vulcan masquerade as "Heldreich" and "Gluhtfang", Juno and Venus as "Himmelinne" and "Lachmund", it seems like some grotesque carnival jest. The gods of Greece who were subjected to such indignities had certainly not entered the German soul. Still, if we are to understand the spiritual evolution that was to culminate in the eighteenth century, we must learn to focus our eyes to this old baroque poetry.¹ Once we grasp what its criteria of beauty were—and in all epochs it is not what we moderns regard as beauty that counts, but what the age itself regarded as such—it will be found to be by no means devoid of charm. There is fascination in the songs of Kaspar Stieler's *Geharnschte Venus*, although the deity herself is hardly visible through the veils ; her name being, indeed, little more than a catchpenny title.

There is no real understanding, then, in the exotic and artificial movement of the baroque, for the beauty and humanity for which Greece and the Olympian guardians of Greek beauty stood. It is not until we reach the eighteenth century that I am tempted to linger ; for it was that century which first made Hellenism a living factor in the spiritual evolution of Europe. My friend Mr Montgomery, in his little

¹ Cp. the recent enlightening work of a young Viennese scholar, Herbert Cysarz, *Deutsche Barockdichtung*, Leipzig, 1924.

book on one of the purest souls that ever fell under the fascination of the Greek gods, the unhappy Hölderlin,¹ has admirably described for us the rising tide of appreciation of antiquity in the eighteenth century, and shown us the concept of Hellenism gradually emerging.

There are three great phases in the classicism of the German eighteenth century, each of which represents a marvellous advance over its predecessor. In the first, Gottsched, the literary dictator of the German literature of his day, sees the ancient world mainly, if not entirely, through the distorting medium of the over-cultured French taste of the *grand siècle*. His earth-born, matter-of-fact mind was frankly intolerant of gods of any kind, whether they happened to be Homer's or Milton's; if the poet could not dispense with them, Gottsched recommended him at least to avoid the supernatural as much as possible. The traditional Plautine gods of the *Amphitryon* were, no doubt, most to his liking. On Gottsched we need not dwell.

The second great phase of eighteenth-century development is represented by Lessing and Winckelmann. Lessing stands for what to our modern minds seems a rather ungenerous denunciation of the classicism of the French seventeenth century. This need not, however, be reckoned too seriously against him; for it is only by such vehement unjustness that literature progresses. Lessing's insistence that he who would drink of the waters of Hippocrene must drink them at the source, was at least an axiom of real significance for his age. I do not know of any passage in which Lessing has given his direct opinion about the gods of Greece; but they were, no doubt, to him mere "allegorische Wesen", if not, indeed, what he called "personifirte Abstracta".² His great

¹ Marshall Montgomery, *Friedrich Hölderlin and the German Neo-Hellenic Movement*, Part I, London, Oxford University Press, 1923.

² *Laokoön*, X.

contemporary Winckelmann has much more to say that matters. Winckelmann was the discoverer of ancient beauty for northern Europe; in his famous phrase, "edle Einfalt und stille Grösse", he revealed, as in a flash, what the whole Renaissance movement had failed to grasp, that Greek beauty is a serene thing, that its greatness lies in its simplicity. But there were limits to Winckelmann's revelation; he had at bottom an antiquarian type of mind, a mind that rose to mighty deductions by virtue of a rare faculty for casting itself back into a remote past; but he lacked the life-giving power of linking up the past with the present, and thereby giving the latter greater depth and fullness. He taught us that the gods of Greece were beautiful *eidola* of humanity; but his gods were, after all, lifeless gods, marble gods, gods of the museum. He saw them with cold, rationalistic eyes as symbols of a remote beauty, or even as mere schematic allegories. Winckelmann and Lessing caught a glimpse of the promised land, but it was given to neither of them to take possession of it. They magnificently prepared the way for the coming of the gods of Greece; but they were not onlookers at their triumphal entry into German literature; they failed to reconcile the symbols of ancient beauty with the ideals of the modern world.

Meanwhile, side by side with the labours of these great classic minds to force antiquity to give up its secret, we have other evidence that the Greek gods were indispensable for eighteenth-century poetry. There is the gay jingling verse of the anacreonticists in France and in Germany; but the only Olympians these poets cared for were Bacchus and Venus, whom they made the symbols of a light and frivolous criticism of life and its lighter joys. Or again, there are the delicate Dresden-china nymphs and fauns of Gessner's mythological world, strange, sentimental perversions of Theocritus. But these were only little enclaves of artificial dalliance; still the bridge

was not cast across the deep eighteenth-century cleft between the ideal and the reality. Of greater significance was Wieland's interpretation of antiquity. In his early, pietistic days, that poet had frowned disapprovingly on the Bacchuses and Venuses of the rococo; although he had himself introduced the gods in the traditional way, in his youthful epics, *Hermann* and *Cyrus*. But he, too, when his pietistic phase passed and he appeared in his true colours as a laughing Democritos, harked back to the rococo. His Hellas was now a Hellas that revelled in unabashed epicureanism, and jumbled together, with reckless indifference, Christianity, Horace, and the Greeks. There was, in truth, not much Greek blood in Wieland's veins; the gods of Greece with whom he was on most familiar terms were those of his favourite author Lucian. But let us not be unjust to him, and there is a danger of this, for few of us have patience nowadays to read the long and tedious novels of his later life. And yet, books like *Agathodämon* and *Aristipp* do show a finer, more serious conception of the Greek world, and a better understanding of the share of Greece in modern culture; as he grew older, Wieland was susceptible to the new forces of his age; he had learned not merely from Winckelmann, but also from Herder.

We may, then, scorn the baroque and the rococo as artificial and untrue; we may writhe under the frivolity of the anacreonticists; Winckelmann's Olympos in its remoteness may leave us cold; but we must not forget that the Greek gods these men looked up to provided their imaginations with a refuge from the grey world of every day. Gessner's unwillingness to stand up to the living present may be but a cowardly shirking of the true poet's first duty to his time; we may resent Wieland's acrid, euhemeristic rationalism, which fondles the old gods only to proclaim them impostors; or Winckelmann's view, that they were only eternally beautiful allegories;

but to all these men the gods ruled over a world of freer, happier fancy, which was more congenial to them than the world they had to live in.

Suddenly, however, the placidity of this age of Enlightenment was disturbed; a wave of militant individualism spread over Germany from that inexhaustible source of spiritual energy, Rousseau; the era of "Storm and Stress" opened. One might reasonably expect that this age, with its vituperation of classical regularity, its adoration of Shakespeare, its demand for personality—and again personality—in poetry, would not have much thought to spare for the remote gods of Greece. Yet, paradoxical as it may seem, it was just the "Storm and Stress" which conferred new life upon the gods, and made their blood run red again. How is it to be explained?

The baroque and the rococo, we have seen, had hob-nobbed with the Greek gods on the most familiar footing; these were at the beck and call of every poetaster. This happens in every epoch of artificial "correctness"; the more law-bound a literature is, the more ready it is to summon the gods to its aid, until the appeal ultimately becomes as meaningless as the poet's to his muse. Familiarity of this kind may not always breed contempt; but it brings death and petrification to its high patrons; the glib friends of the gods are in the end their worst enemies. Another obstacle the Olympians encountered—and, indeed, it has been so in all ages—was the classical tradition. Every return of the gods into our modern imaginative world is effected in the teeth of opposition from the classicists, who with their ponderous learning encrust them with death-masks. That was the reason why Rousseau and his young German disciples, with their repudiation of tradition and artificiality, prepared the way for a deeper and truer appreciation of antiquity than Europe had yet known.

With youthful exuberance Goethe, the "Stürmer und Dränger", attacked the ironic effigies of Wieland's

Alceste in his *Götter, Helden und Wieland*; but Goethe is more intent here on ridiculing the "Prinzen-Hofmeister zu Weimar" than in defending the honour of the gods. His real reply to Wieland, a reply before which Wieland's whole would-be Greek world shrivelled up, was his magnificent *Prometheus*:

Bedecke deinen Himmel, Zeus,
Mit Wolkendunst,
Und übe, dem Knaben gleich,
Der Disteln köpft,
An Eichen dich und Bergeshöhn . . .

The gods of Greece this Prometheus defied—

Ich kenne nichts Ärmeres
Unter der Sonn', als euch, Götter!
Ihr nähret kümmerlich
Von Opfersteuern
Und Gebetshauch
Eure Majestät—

were, in the transient vision Goethe vouchsafes us of them, more living and majestic and terrible than Wieland's puppets, although these were more in harmony with the classical tradition. Here in the fate of Prometheus, as again of Niobe,¹ the "Storm and Stress" found a chord in the antique mythology which responded to their own rebel souls. Themselves young Titans, they were able, as the *petits-mâtres* and sentimental shepherds of the rococo age had never been, to appreciate the Titanic majesty of the Olympians. With its intense craving for life and reality and personality, the "Storm and Stress" first made the return of the Greek gods into poetry possible again.

For what Goethe achieved in the sovereign irresponsibility of genius, Herder had made the preparation. It was Herder, that most prolific and elusive of all the northern thinkers and pioneers, that

¹ Cp. F. Strich, *op. cit.*, I, p. 226.

"Mehrer des Reiches" of the spirit, as no other German of the eighteenth century, who revealed the meaning of Greece to the modern world.¹ Herder learned from Winckelmann; but he was more deeply in the debt of Hamann; and Hamann had already called for, not imitation of the Greeks, but a tapping of the headsprings of antiquity. Herder sought living gods in Greece, not marble images. All Herder's voyages of discovery into the past of the human spirit—and his whole life was spent in such voyaging—were in search of a key to the present. He was the first German thinker to invest the old gods with a modern ethical ideal. Guardians of the highest beauty they had been; now they became the champions of a new humanity. Herder combated the age-long antagonism of the Christian faith to the Greek mythology, by showing that both had their appointed place in the development of humanity. "Humanität!" Round this one word all Herder's work ultimately crystallizes.

But there were many obstacles to the return of the Olympians into German poetry. For a time, the sturdier Germanic gods of the North threatened to oust them; and the sudden rise to favour of the northern mythology—our own poet Gray had, perhaps, some share in it—is one of the most interesting episodes of eighteenth-century development.² The German poets for a brief spell donned bardic robes and attuned their verses to northern strains; the gods of the grove were ranged against the gods of the temple on the hill. With a zeal that almost

¹ It would be difficult to bring together from the thirty-two volumes of Herder's works the many passages which have bearing on this matter. The reader is especially referred to *Vom neuern Gebrauch der Mythologie*, in the *Fragmente* (*Werke*, ed. Suphan, I, pp. 426 ff.); the second "Wäldchen" on Klotz's *Homerische Briefe* (III, pp. 195 ff.); *Journal meiner Reise* (IV, pp. 462 ff.); *Denkmahl Johann Winckelmanns* (VIII, pp. 437 ff.); and, above all, the *Briefe zur Beförderung der Humanität* (XVII, XVIII), and the section on the Greeks in *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (XIV, pp. 92 ff.).

² Cp. the series of studies by P. van Tieghem on *La Mythologie et l'ancienne poésie scandinaves dans la littérature européenne au XVIII^e siècle*, in *Edda*, XI-XIII, 1919-20.

reminds one of Zesen in the previous century, Klopstock expunged from his poetry the names of the classic gods and put Germanic deities in their places. Jupiter is converted into Wodan, Apollo into Braga, Venus and Ceres become Freya and Hertha. So far, this is comprehensible ; but when Klopstock descends to minor Scandinavian deities, we are in the absurd position of having to consult a dictionary of Northern mythology to discover what they stand for ! This sudden affection for the religion of the North was, however, little more than a retarding moment in the restoration of the Greek gods ; perhaps, indeed, it was partly due to a growing discontent with the schematic formulas into which the old gods had degenerated in the previous age.

Let us follow the story further. Goethe and Schiller passed with the maturing years out of their "Storm and Stress" ; they became classic poets, and established the third and culminating phase of German classicism, which developed with such amazing swiftness out of the void. We see these two poets wrestling persistently with the classic idea ; their highest energies were, we might say, directed towards bringing the gods of Greece into honour again ; to creating, on the foundations of Herder's universalism and humanity, a modern world that would be a fit home for them.

It must not be forgotten—and our literary historians are, I think, inclined to dwell overmuch on the turning-over of a new leaf, when Goethe and Schiller passed from their "Storm and Stress" to the staid classicism of Weimar—that this last phase of eighteenth-century Hellenism was intimately bound up with the old French culture, the "Storm and Stress" period itself, and all the turbulent experiences these poets passed through in their youth. They did not repudiate their splendid beginnings ; they rather built upon them ; endeavoured to reconcile their new horizons with the old.

Schiller had greater difficulty than Goethe in divesting himself of the French tradition; unversed in Greek, he was never able to see the old world face to face; moreover, his whole mentality compelled him to regard it abstractly. To him Homer's heroic world never was—as to Voss when he translated the *Odyssey* or to Werther in those first idyllic days in Wahlheim—an immediate impression. His Hellenism was a philosophical deduction, an ideal; but just here lay its significance and its virtue. And in the restoration of the old theocracy it was Schiller, not Goethe, who had the "vision splendid". There is no more wonderful poem in the whole range of German verse, no poem that has reverberated longer through subsequent ages, than *Die Götter Griechenlands*, which Schiller published in Wieland's *Teutscher Merkur* in 1788. With this great poem, we might say, the doors were flung open, and the gods of Greece passed back at last into modern poetry. Out of the fullness of his heart Schiller here voices the longing of the "sentimental" poet for the lost "naïve", or, as he put it later, for that nature which is only our lost childhood. The gods of Greece are again the symbols of an "età d' oro"; and the eighteenth century looked back to such an age no less passionately than the seventeenth.

Da ihr noch die schöne Welt regieret,
An der Freude leichtem Gängelband
Selige Geschlechter noch geführt,
Schöne Wesen aus dem Fabelland . . .

Schöne Welt, wo bist du? Kehre wieder,
Holdes Blütenalter der Natur!
Ach, nur in dem Feenland der Lieder
Lebt noch deine fabelhafte Spur.
Ausgestorben trauert das Gefilde,
Keine Gottheit zeigt sich meinem Blick,
Ach, von jenem lebenswarmen Bilde
Blieb der Schatten nur zurück.

Without Herder and the "Storm and Stress" there could have been no *Götter Griechenlands*. Had not,

indeed, Herder already said all that was to be said, when, in his essay on Winckelmann, he wrote: "Wo bist du, geliebtes Griechenland, voll schöner Götter- und Jugendgestalten, voll Wahrheit im Truge und Trug voll schöner Wahrheit? Deine Zeit ist dahin."¹ It is this thought that Schiller crystallizes into undying verse. To him the Greek gods represent an ideal of harmonious beauty which has vanished from the world, to give place to an outlook on life in which sense and spirit are implacably at war. Like the poets of the preceding age, Schiller turns to Greece in his flight from the discordant present; his vision, no less than theirs, is born of discontent and disillusionment. We are sometimes apt to forget that Weimar Hellenism, with all its noble achievement, is reared upon an irreconcilable dualism; that its most constant element is no exotic culture, Greek or French, but that all-suffusing pietism which forms the abiding basis in the spiritual life of the German people. Hence the eternal cry of "Entsagung" that rings through all German poetry; hence, too, that unquenchable thirst of the finer spirits, imprisoned within a harsh reality, for a serener world which knows nothing of such "Entsagung". And now, as always, the gods of Greece are the guardians of the ideal for the disillusioned soul; the cry goes forth to them when the spirit is in tribulation, or when the craving for beauty makes itself felt above the demands of the moral life. Thus the significance of Schiller's *Götter Griechenlands* lies, not in its criticism of the present, to which the gods are but a foil, but rather in the foil itself.

At no period of German history have the gods of Greece played a more positive and harmonious role than now. Schiller's gods may be but "schöne Wesen aus dem Fabelland", merely shadows adorned

¹ *Werke*, VIII, p. 481. Or, again, in his *Ideen zu einer Geschichte der Philosophie der Menschheit* (XIV, p. 142); "Verschwunden sind sie von der Erde. . . Werden, da diese schönsten Idole der menschlichen Einbildungskraft gefallen sind, auch die minder-schönen wie sie fallen? Und wem werden sie Platz machen, andern Idolen?"

with infinite "Anmut und Würde"; but in the shadow-land of the ideal they reign undisputed and indisputable. Of that religious hostility which had dogged Hellenism in Europe since the Renaissance, there is far less in Schiller than is commonly attributed to him. Schiller's Greek gods are not "heathen" gods to be relegated to the Christian Hell, as Dante and Milton had relegated them; as Heinsius and Opitz did; nay, even as Richard Wagner in his *Tannhäuser*. Nor do they stand for an anti-Christian joy in the material and the unspiritual, as with the anacreonticists and the epicurean Wieland. Schiller holds up the Olympos-governed world as a contrast to the imperfect world of sorrow under Christian monotheism; but the antithesis in his mind is mainly an aesthetic one; antagonism to Christianity was no more in his thought than it had been in Herder's. That was left to his critics from Stolberg onwards to discover; left to the new Romantic School to exploit with ever-increasing virulence. Schiller only demanded justice for the old gods; and in a poem he once planned, the Apostate Julian was to have defended these gods against the encroachments of the new faith. Heir of a century of wide-hearted, tolerant deism, Schiller sought conciliation, not strife; his whole spiritual life was a search for harmony—harmony between sense and spirit, between inclination and duty. Thus he sought to reconcile the gods of Greece with the modern world; to bring them back into a distraught age to rule over a kingdom where beauty and the moral world were one.

But to Schiller it was not given to realize his dream, to re-establish this kingdom of Apollo upon earth. His was an essentially tragic mind; antitheses were—as with all tragic poets—the breath of his being; and he lived and thought in antitheses to the last: his life went down in the tragedy of broken ends. Goethe, the mature, classic Goethe of the middle and the later years, was the truer Hellenist; for to Goethe's

serene mind the world was never a thing of antagonisms. God made the world, "and behold, it was good". The created universe—matter and spirit, nature and art, the past and the present—was to him one and indivisible. He lacked—for may we not say that it was a defect?—that divine discontent which lent wings to Schiller's flight into the ideal. He did not need to seek an harmonious solution to the dualism of the world; for to him the harmony was always there. Schiller's penetrating insight already discovered this, when he contemplated what might have been, had Goethe been born into his own world, born an ancient Greek.¹

Goethe first entered into full possession of antique beauty, in Italy, where the last vestiges of his "Storm and Stress" were stripped from him.

O wieühl' ich in Rom mich so froh! gedenk' ich der Zeiten,
Da mich ein graulicher Tag hinten im Norden umfing,
Trübe der Himmel und schwer auf meine Scheitel sich senkte,
Farb= und gestaltlos die Welt um den Ermatteten lag . . .
Nun umleuchtet der Glanz des helleren Äthers die Stirne;
Phöbus rufet, der Gott, Formen und Farben hervor . . .
Welche Seligkeit ward mir Sterblichem! Träum' ich? Empfänget

Dein ambrosisches Haus, Jupiter Vater, den Gast?
Ach! hier lieg' ich, und strecke nach deinen Knieen die Hände
Flehend aus. O vernimm, Jupiter Xenius, mich! . . .
Bist du der wirtliche Gott? O dann so verstosse den Gastfreund
Nicht von deinem Olymp wieder zur Erde hinab!²

In Rome Goethe received the consecration of Apollo; and from now on his allegiance to the old gods never wavered. Both in the letter and in the spirit Goethe was, indeed, the great Hellenist of his age.³ But even he was not immune to the Nemesis that has pursued Hellenism in our modern time: the Nemesis of the classical tradition, of estrangement from the present. As Goethe's life moved to its

¹ Letter to Goethe of August 23rd, 1794. ² *Römische Elegien*, VII.

³ Cp. E. Maass, *Goethe und die Antike*, Berlin, 1912, p. 646: "Die Wahrheit bleibt immer Wahrheit. Und die Wahrheit ist jetzt: Goethe, der erste Hellenist unseres Volkes."

close, his Hellenism gradually petrified ; his rooms grew more and more crowded with statuary and plaster casts ; his eyes dwelt with increasing pleasure on cold engravings of antiquities. Thus even in his resplendent, life-giving imagination the old gods were surely passing back, with the advancing years, into cold, white marble again.

To Homer Goethe had returned in his *Hermann und Dorothea* ; with Homer he measured himself in his *Achilleis*. The Olympians play a large part in the latter fragment ; but one feels somehow that a veil has descended ; they are Homeric gods, imitated gods, not the gods whom Prometheus had defied. And again in *Pandora*, that great deep poem, suffused with the subtlest Platonism, a poem in which, I often think, is to be found the most concentrated essence of Goethe's Hellenism, does one not sometimes cherish a sacrilegious longing for the passionate pulse-beat of the "Storm and Stress", not wish that, just for once, his Prometheus there would take on the colour of the great Titan Goethe had conceived in his youth ? But let me turn rather to the culminating creation of Goethe's poetic life, his *Faust*. Is it too great a flight of symbolizing fancy to see, in the union of Faust and Helena, the crowning contribution of Germany's classic age to the conciliation of the old gods with the modern world ? The "Klassische Walpurgisnacht" of that work is a very wonderful, magical creation ; one might even say it only misses being the last word in the consummation of German humanism. Think what the "Klassische Walpurgisnacht" might have been, had it not been forcibly linked up with Faust, for whose fate it was of no poetic necessity ; had it not been brought into an unnatural parallelism with the "Walpurgisnacht" of the First Part, and made to serve, in Goethe's mind, a not unsimilar end. Think if, instead of seeking out the grotesque elements of the Greek mythology, Goethe had made this pagan

festival the quintessence of what was most beautiful in it ; if the gods of Olympus had been given their rightful share in it ; if, not Galatea, but Aphrodite herself, had risen resplendent from the waves in that gorgeous "pervigilium Veneris" with which the festival culminates. Might it not have been the final transfiguration of Schiller's vision? The gods of Greece may have no part in the Second *Faust*, but we are always conscious of their aura ; they preside invisibly at the nuptials of Faust and Helena ; and their blessing lies on those idyllic scenes in the vale of Tempe and by the Aegean Sea.

Not, however, to the ageing Goethe, but to the young generation of poets and thinkers, passed, in the first third of the new century, the torch of idealism which Schiller had lighted. The Romanticists viewed the pageant of literature from a high vantage-ground, and with wide sympathies ; they dreamt the great dream of a "universal poetry" of mankind, as it had not presented itself even to Herder. Surely now, if ever, Zeus and Apollo, Pallas Athene and Aphrodite, could consort in harmony with Wotan, Thor, and Freia ; with the Jehovah of the Old Testament and the Christ of the New. And yet this was not so. The atmosphere of romanticism, with all its universalism, was far less favourable for the gods of Greece in German poetry than Weimar humanism had been. The world-literature of the Romantic theorists was only a dream, which the Romantic poetry could not make a reality. For with the intenser individualism of the new epoch there came a searching of the heart which the first theorists had not reckoned with. The old passionate self-abnegation of German mysticism and pietism returned, and with it the revival of an intensely personal Christianity, a repudiation of the cold deism of the eighteenth century. Indeed, this religious revival led not a few of the gentler souls of the epoch back into the fold of the mother Church. The God of such a faith could

no longer live in peace with Zeus and Apollo ; in the new Christian temples the altars set up by eighteenth-century Hellenism could have no place. The classic age had not felt the need of tempering its optimistic Christianity with a renunciatory Nazarenism ; deism cherished no antagonism to the joyous serenity of Hellenism. But national adversity and the upset of the order of the world, first by the French Revolution and subsequently by Napoleon, had darkened the souls of the new generation, and given a sombrer colouring to their lives. Something of the hostility of earlier centuries to the Greek ideals returned ; the old battle-cry of " Hie Christian, hie heathen ! " was revived ; the gods of Greece became once more the gods of heathendom.

On the very threshold of this new era stood one whose devotion to the gods of Greece—learned, in the first instance, from his master Schiller—had an intensity beside which Schiller's seems dispassionate indeed : Friedrich Hölderlin. Hölderlin clung to Hellenism with every fibre of his passionate, unbalanced soul ; to him it did not represent, as to Schiller, a golden age to look back upon in elegiac retrospect ; it was an intense reality, a sheet-anchor—the only sheet-anchor—in his storm-tossed life. Hölderlin's Hellenism was not a thing of a remote past ; the gods of Greece he worshipped were still living gods ; they spoke to him from lake and forest, in the storm and in the sunshine. They either lived in the nature around him, or they did not live—had never lived for him—at all. There is no Hellenist among the German poets who was less affected by the dead hand of the classic tradition than Hölderlin. So intense, indeed, was his Hellenism that it led to his ostracism from the great movement of the time ; and yet none was a truer Romanticist than he. Hölderlin's Hellenism was no joyful possession ; but a faith which the dark powers in his soul were constantly endeavouring to

dispossess. Most distraught of poets—and his distraughtness ultimately passed over into insanity—Hölderlin lived in a distraught age. Schiller had the advantage of being older, more firmly rooted in the pre-revolutionary eighteenth century; and he might well cherish his placid vision of Olympos. For Hölderlin, on the other hand, the gods of Greece were no unperturbed rulers over a kingdom of beauty; but rather gods shuddering unceasingly under the Damocles-sword of a soulless Nemesis, a Schicksal. That there was a pessimistic foil to the Hellenism of the classic age I have already tried to show; but it was as nothing compared with the sinister pessimism in Hölderlin's soul, a pessimism which was ultimately to destroy his faith in Greek beauty and in life itself; to drive his Empedocles to immolate himself in Etna. Eighteenth-century Hellenism was still an Apollo-governed Hellenism; but the Romanticists had dethroned Apollo and set the tragic Dionysos in his place.

The Romantic age was always stronger in theory than in practice; and it would be profitable, had we time, to study the attitude of the Romantic thinkers to the Greek gods, from the penetrating Greek studies of the great ideologue of Romanticism, Friedrich Schlegel, to the philosophy of Schelling, and in the Romantic mythologists from Creuzer onwards. They all deal, explicitly or implicitly, with the problem that interests us. It may seem more reprehensible that I have not found time to dwell upon the attitude to our question of Hegel, this great Romantic thinker, part of whose mission would seem to have been to destroy Romanticism: one after the other he drew the veils of his metaphysical abstractions across the Romantic firmament, and the light of its stars went out. Can it be wondered that on the gods of Greece he had a peculiarly stultifying effect? They fade away under his scrutiny into abstractions; or rather, let us say, they retire from a conflict not

of their seeking into their museum recluse; they become marble gods once more. Indeed, this was literally true; for when the Greek gods do appear in the Romantic literature, it is either as denizens of a grotesque underworld of popular fable, or as marble effigies. I think of Eichendorff, of Diana in Heine's *Atta Troll*:

Auch das Antlitz weiss wie Marmor,
Und wie Marmor kalt;

or that terrible marble Sphinx in the old "Märchenwald", who held the tragic secret of the *Buch der Lieder* in her keeping.

Thus the religious zeal of the Romantic age either banished the gods of Greece to the limbo of superstitions, or regarded them in the light of the classical tradition. But there was a difference between the classical interpretation now and that of Winckelmann's time: the Romantic marble gods were no longer invested with the "edle Einfalt und stille Grösse"; now, under the gentler, mellowed light of Romanticism, the marble glowed. Not Winckelmann or Goethe, but the Danish sculptor, Thorwaldsen, was, it seems to me, the real interpreter of these marble gods after the Romantic heart.

In no poet of the early nineteenth century is the conflict of the Olympians with the spirit of Romanticism clearer and more acute than in that great renegade of the Romantic faith, Heine.¹

There is a wonderful passage in Heine's *Reisebilder*, which no one who reads it can ever forget. After quoting from the ninth book of the *Iliad* the description of the gods holding high festival in Olympus:

Also den ganzen Tag bis spät zur sinkenden Sonne
Schmausten sie; und nicht mangelt' ihr Herz des gemeinsamen
Mahles,
Nicht des Saitengetöns von der lieblichen Leier Apollons,
Noch des Gesangs der Musen mit holdantwortender Stimme—

¹ There is a Berlin dissertation of 1905 by H. Friedemann on *Die Götter Griechenlands von Schiller bis Heine*; although not as helpful as its title might lead us to expect, it is suggestive on Heine's Hellenism.

Heine continues :

Da plötzlich keuchte heran ein bleicher, bluttriefender Jude, mit einer Dornenkrone auf dem Haupte und mit einem grossen Holzkreuz auf der Schulter ; und er warf das Kreuz auf den hohen Göttertisch, dass die goldnen Pokale zitterten und die Götter verstummten und erblichen und immer bleicher wurden, bis sie endlich ganz in Nebel zerrannen.¹

In this wonderful vision is concentrated all the embittered hostility that had sprung up in the Romantic mind between Christianity and the old gods.² And indeed, the terrible spiritual conflict in Heine's soul between Nazarenism and Hellenism is, to my thinking, the most significant spiritual happening in the period of declining Romanticism. It has been dwelt upon amongst us in England by Matthew Arnold, who felt its significance ; but he failed to penetrate all that it stood for in its time. It is usually interpreted—very crudely, I think—as a mere antithesis of spirituality and sensuality, a degradation of the gods of Greece into patrons of Heine's own trivial sensualism. Nothing could be falsier. The conflict is, as much else that made Heine's life the terribly tragic thing it was, a Romantic heritage, to which no full-blood Romanticist ever gave acuter expression than he. The sensitive temperament of this outcast of Romanticism was tossed helplessly between the two poles of the joy of life and asceticism. His first love had been the Greek Eros—his first love and his last. There is surely no more pathetic scene in all literary

¹ *Die Stadt Lucca*, VI.

² How Romantic this conception of the fading of the old gods before the Cross is, is seen in the fact that it is foreshadowed in Novalis's *Hymnen an die Nacht* :

Nur Ein Gedanke wars,
Der furchtbar zu den frohen Tischen trat
Und das Gemüt in wilde Schrecken hüllte.
Hier wussten selbst die Götter keinen Rat,
Der das Gemüt mit süssem Troste füllte ;
Geheimnisvoll war dieses Unholds Pfad,
Des Wut kein Flehn und keine Gabe stillte—
Es war der Tod, der dieses Lustgelag
Mit Angst und Schmerz und Tränen unterbrach.

history than that where this poor paralysed German poet drags himself from what was so soon to be his "mattress-grave" to the feet of our lady of Milo in the Louvre, and there weeps the bitterest tears of his life. And she could only look down compassionately on him; she could neither console him nor help him, for she had no arms.¹ Is it not true of all Heine's Greek gods that they have no arms? They are powerless to help him. But Eros played only one part in Heine's life, and that not, I think, the greater. The intense religious emotionalism of Romanticism was deeply engraved on his fervid Jewish soul, and he passed through a renunciation and abnegation of life bitterer than any ever known in the Romantic "Sanctuary of Sorrows". Goethe's "kummervolle Nächte" spent in tears are but a pale initiation into the mysterious ways of God to man, by the side of the excruciating sufferings of the long Paris death-agony.

I should like to have said more of Heine's religious life; for it is not foreign to our theme; I should like to have shown you how the Romantic way of thinking, and, with it, the Romantic attitude to the Greek gods, assumed a new and strange form under the influence of the fantastic—unromantic, and yet of romantic provenance—religion of Saint-Simon. What Saint-Simonism meant for Heine's spiritual life has yet to be fully gauged²; and still more, what it meant for the undermining of the great Romantic movement in Germany. Not Hegel himself did so much to shake German poetry in its allegiance to the Romantic idealism, and sweep it into the arms of a prosaic-minded Young Germany. But these considerations would take us too far afield. Let me only ask you to look for a moment at the gulf that separates these Greek gods of Heine from those of Schiller's vision.

¹ *Nachwort zum Romanzero*.

² See an article on *Heine and the Saint-Simonians* by Miss E. M. Butler, in the *Modern Language Review*, XVIII, 1923, pp. 68 ff., a forerunner, I hope, of a larger study of the significance of Saint-Simonism for German thought and literature.

It is not merely that an intense religious antagonism now disturbs the harmony, so dear to Schiller's soul, between the old Hellenism and the new ; but the gods themselves have undergone a change. In the disillusioning light of scientific progress, Heine's gods, when they are not mere marble effigies, have become shadowy abstractions. Not the Aphrodite that rose from the Greek sea is Heine's bitter-sweet passion ; but the Venus of the Louvre, the Venus who has no arms. The gods of Greece that reigned when Goethe and Schiller dwelt in Arcadia were still living gods ; it is only pale ghosts of them that fade away before the Cross in Heine's vision.

Das sind sie selber, die Götter von Hellas,
Die einst so freudig die Welt beherrschten,
Doch jetzt, verdrängt und verstorben,
Als ungeheure Gespenster dahinziehen
Am mitternächtlichen Himmel. . . .

Doch heil'ges Erbarmen und schauriges Mitleid
Durchströmt mein Herz,
Wenn ich euch jetzt da droben schaue,
Verlassene Götter,
Tote, nachtwandelnde Schatten,
Nebelschwache, die der Wind verscheucht—
Und wenn ich bedenke, wie feig und windig
Die Götter sind, die euch besiegten,
Die neuen, herrschenden, tristen Götter,
Die schadenfrohen im Schafspelz der Demut—
O, da fasst mich ein düsterer Groll,
Und brechen möcht' ich die neuen Tempel,
Und kämpfen für euch, ihr alten Götter,
Für euch und eu'r gutes ambrosisches Recht,
Und vor euren hohen Altären,
Den wiedergebauten, den opferdampfenden,
Möcht' ich selber knien und beten,
Und flehend die Arme erheben.¹

Yes, ghosts they are all, these gods of Heine's. There is not even a glimpse in this *Götterdämmerung* of that inspiring hope which lay behind all the elegiac pessimism

¹ *Die Nordsee*, II.

of Schiller's soul, that the golden age would some day and somehow return again, and the kingdom of Apollo once more be established upon this earth.

In very truth, the gods of Greece now fade out of German poetry. One might perhaps have expected that, with the metamorphosis of Hegelianism into a more positive philosophy under Feuerbach, the old eighteenth-century freedom from spiritual shackles would, as in "Storm and Stress" days, have been restored, and the conditions be more favourable for a return of the old gods into poetry. But this was not to be. The factors that made for spiritual enfranchisement in the nineteenth century were of a different kind: a scientific materialism on the one hand, a belief in the salving virtues of the historic method on the other. Now, if anything is poison to the gods of Greece in poetry, it is the historical attitude of mind. The old gods can only live their full, rich life in a world where time is not, where past and present are one. No one felt this better than Goethe; his poetic world was timeless, and in its timelessness complete and perfect; while to the Romantic mind the world was one of unending change and evolution.¹ To the Romanticists the gods of Greece were only the historical figments of a primitive imagination, something that pertained to the youth of our race. Even more effectually was the way barred for their return by a new force unknown to the great classical age: pessimism. In the atmosphere of this modern pessimism the gods of Greece could not live. Fatalism they knew; indeed fatalism was a condition of their existence. But what a serene and beautiful thing Greek fatalism is, compared with the pessimism of the modern soul! It is the linking up of fatalism with the tragic Christian faith that converts it into a thing of evil. In the age of dissension and disillusionment between 1830 and 1848, there was no room for the "schönen Wesen aus dem Fabelland";

¹ This is the burden of Fritz Strich's suggestive work, *Deutsche Klassik und Romantik, oder Vollendung und Unendlichkeit*, Munich, 1922.

and when that political age fell together like a house of cards, at the Revolution of 1848, and when its failure besmirched and disheartened all that was best and noblest in the mind of Northern Europe, the Germans did not—could not—turn back to the gods of Greece for consolation. The age of pessimism broke in grim earnest; the gods that appealed to this hopeless Europe were not Zeus and Apollo, not even Dionysos, but the dark, joyless gods of the north—gods that were no longer the masters of their souls—the Wotan of Wagner's mighty *Nibelung's Ring*.¹

In this later nineteenth century the gods of Greece were dead, vanished from the world, without seeming hope of ever coming back. How dead they were we see, if we turn to the nebulous, unplastic figures of Hamerling's *Venus im Exil* or *Amor und Psyche*, poems once popular, but now long relegated to the lumber-room of the effete and musty things of literature. The gods of Greece were surely never less alive than they are here.²

But again the whirligig of time brings its surprises. As the nineteenth century moved to its close, the cloud of depressing pessimism began to break. The finest minds of that age had, it is true, like Richard Wagner, turned, with deepening despair, to the East, to find a last word there with which to clench their faith in the Nirwana, to worship in Buddha a new saviour from the deluding optimism of a false world. But a new generation was arising which demanded a truer actuality, a braver stand against the ills of life. The long reign of Schopenhauer—very much longer, as far as poetry was concerned, than Kant's or Hegel's—was visibly drawing to a close. In the apostasy of Friedrich Nietzsche from his old master, the gauntlet of

¹ Yet perhaps, after all, behind the gods of Wagner's world lurk the old gods of Greece. Cp. P. C. Wilson, *Wagner's Dramas and Greek Tragedy*, New York, 1919.

² I am not forgetful of other isolated productions of this time, such as Paul Heyse's delightful *Der letzte Centaur*, or that most beautiful of all prose poems in the German tongue, Gottfried Keller's *Das Tannzlegendchen*; but in Keller's heaven there is no place even for the nine Muses.

the new time was thrown down. Nietzsche's breach with Wagner I have elsewhere singled out as the decisive moment from which the last epoch in German poetry took its beginning : the crossing of the swords. Nietzsche had begun life as a disciple of Schopenhauer, by proclaiming the doctrine, so comforting to the romantic heart, that the ultimate basis of the Greek religion was Dionysiac and tragic, not Apollonic and serene ; that the Greek dream of Olympos was, like Schiller's, merely a foil to a pessimistic outlook on the world. But, like Heine, this modern Romantic philosopher became a renegade ; he disavowed his Romanticism, and proclaimed a new philosophy of optimism, a faith in " man's unconquerable mind ".

Clearly the long night of Romantic pessimism was passing ; and in the fresher air that preceded the dawn, the old gods began once more to rub their eyes and think of a return to earth. As the century reached its close, they came once more to life in German poetry. In Switzerland was written a great poem, the greatest, I veritably believe, in this, the last epoch of German literature, the *Olympische Frühling* of Carl Spitteler. Here once again after a long span of time, we have in European literature an epic in the noble style, and moreover, an epic of the gods of Greece. Transformed, transfigured, rejuvenated, these old gods pass once more across the stage of Western Europe ; once more the marble museum gods of classic learning, the shadow gods who had faded before Heine's bleeding Nazarene, are forgotten ; the old Olympians come back into our world, radiant, buoyant with life.

I cannot here, at the close of an overlong lecture, speak to you as I should like of this wonderful epic.¹ Let me only say that Spitteler has followed the most dangerous of all courses for the poet who will succeed in this world : he has scouted tradition ; he has defied

¹ I have dealt with Spitteler in an article in the *Contemporary Review* of January 1921, on the occasion of the award to him of the Nobel Prize in literature.

alike the conventions of the epic and the century-old conception of the gods of Greece. These are things no contemporary criticism ever condones; and Spitteler has paid the penalty of an incredible neglect. At the beginning of his epic he summons the old gods from the underworld, where they have slept their long sleep while Chronos reigned in Olympus. And how different is this underworld, this kingdom of Hades, from the drab, colourless Styx landscape of the tradition! How vivid the wondrous journey by which he leads his gods to the upper world and the sun! And the gods themselves! No pale shadows they of the classical tradition, but real, living gods—yes, gods with a considerable dose of Swiss peasant blood in their veins; and they face the riddle of destiny from sides undreamt of by Schiller, or Goethe, or Heine. Spitteler lavishes on his creations a wealth of genial humour that has not, I believe, had its like in epic poetry since Ariosto. He places his gods in the service of the burning ideas of our time—he would be no real poet if he did not—he accepts the challenge of the long age of Romantic pessimism; and in his defiance of that pessimism he voices the spirit of youth that has come into the world. Ananke, the terrible machine, the ruler of gods and men, has no longer the last word. Heine's phantoms had faded before the Cross, and the great dynasty of the North had gone down in Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*; but Spitteler's gods do not relinquish their hold upon the world of men. All that Jung-Siegfried was to be, all that he failed to be, passes over into the Herakles of Spitteler's imagination, this son of an immortal Zeus and a mortal Hera, who descends to earth, with brave defiance in his heart and the word "dennoch" on his lips, to proclaim to men new hopes in their high destiny. Thus have the old gods of Greece returned, and returned triumphantly into German poetry.

And here my survey may well close. But if you will look around you in the literature of Germany and of

Europe, you will see, I think, how in other and unexpected quarters the old gods have been restored to honour. Nay more, the classical scholarship of our time has responded to the new demands of youth, and denounced its allegiance to traditional shibboleths ; the eternally young tragedy of Greece has awakened to very real life again.

In the course of this lecture I have not dealt with new things ; I have not asked you to accompany me into untrodden paths of literature. I have rather tried to show, by the light of poetry that is reasonably familiar, what the beauty of Greece has meant for the Northern mind. The gods of Greece have at no time been unwelcome intruders in German poetry ; on the contrary, here, as elsewhere, they have always been the bearers of the ideal. They take on the changing colours of each new age ; they are ever with us as the symbols of harmony and conciliation in the imagination of our race. "Die Götter sterben nicht", sang old Opitz ; "der Todt kan ihrem Samen mit keiner Sichel zu" ; and Schiller :

Rauch ist alles ird'sche Wesen ;
Wie des Dampfes Säule weht,
Schwinden alle Erdengrössen,
Nur die Götter bleiben stet.

II

ESSAYS IN SCANDINAVIAN LITERATURE

FOUR LECTURES ON HENRIK IBSEN

I. EARLY YEARS

WHEN the hundredth birthday of a poet has passed, it is time that the world should have reached some kind of definite opinion concerning his position in the history of letters ; and in the last few years, many brains and pens have busied themselves with this effort to arrive at some kind of finality of judgment about Henrik Ibsen. But the task is even now, when the acts of the nineteenth century may be regarded as closed, by no means easy ; it is still difficult to lift this fighter for new faiths out of the atmosphere of *ira et studium* by which his life-work was enveloped and obscured ; still difficult to attain clearness in respect of the mission that was entrusted to his genius—that “ kald ”, or calling, within the mesh of world-necessity, which not one of the greater children of Ibsen’s brain is ever allowed to forget—and in respect of the manner in which his genius has acquitted itself of its task.

To-day I propose to deal first with Ibsen’s apprenticeship. It may seem, perhaps, superfluous at this late date to expend many words on that apprenticeship, by which I mean the life and work of the poet preceding the tragedies of *The Warriors at Helgeland* and *The Pretenders*. But in our age of psychological knowledge and discovery we have learnt to see in the child the father of the man ; and to appreciate the significance of the first chapter in the biography of a poet or an artist. Thus it would be unwise to pass too lightly over Ibsen’s beginnings.

Henrik Ibsen was born on March 20th, 1828, in the little town of Skien on the south-west coast of Norway. His father and mother showed that exceeding disparity in temperament which seems a necessary condition for the coming of a child of genius. His first outlook on the world from his father's house, the so-called Stockmannsgaard, was on the treeless square of the town: church, town hall, school, not to forget the stocks and the lock-up in which mad people were confined, and the eerie story of the black poodle with the fiery eyes up in the church tower; and behind all this the dull drone of the waterfalls, and the whining—like the cries of women, he says—of the hundreds of saw-mills. It was a sombre childhood, although not perhaps quite so sombre as these memories might lead us to think; but it is less what a man of genius actually experiences in childhood that matters, than the shape which that experience takes in the remembrance of later years. From the beginning, the boy Ibsen was an uncomfortable little outsider to the life around him; a square peg in a round hole. He had that "apart" temperament which does not make for happiness; an inheritance from his mother, and due perhaps ultimately to the fact that he had not much real Norse blood in his veins; his ancestors were, for the most part, German and Danish—he had even a Scotch great-grandmother. He was an old-young child, prickly and uncompanionable, who did not get on well with his playmates; he preferred to shut himself up with his picture-books, to play his own games, and draw or paint for himself. Like all bottled-up children, he lived an unhealthy life in dreams. In his early childhood his father prospered; but then came bankruptcy, when Henrik was eight years old; and the family had to retire to a decayed old house, Venstøb, outside Skien. The boy seems to have suffered from the sense of disgrace and loss of caste which this catastrophe brought with it.

Of his school-days we do not know much ; they were not particularly distinguished ; but, as Carlyle says, your clever boy becomes "Bailie John of Hunter Square", while the dunce becomes "Sir Walter Scott of the Universe". We know little of the books Ibsen read as a boy, or the spiritual influences that helped to mould his character. At the age of fifteen he was confirmed, and his school-days were over. The desire that seems to have been uppermost in his young heart was to become a painter ; but that, in the economic circumstances of the family, was, of course, only a dream ; nor, indeed, had Ibsen much talent in this direction. Instead, he was sent in 1844, at the age of sixteen, to the still more provincial town of Grimstad, to be apprenticed to an apothecary : a career even less congenial than that of the law, which usually falls to the lot of literary genius. Ibsen never saw Skien again, but its ghosts flit through his comedies, *The Young Men's League* and *Pillars of Society* ; and so slight were his ties with his family that only two of the 238 letters which have been printed are written to his blood-relations.¹

Grimstad, with its eight hundred inhabitants, was merely a village. That nearly six of the most impressionable years of Ibsen's adolescence—from sixteen to twenty-two—should have been passed here seemed, indeed, an untoward fate for a poet whose work and thought were to be European. Grimstad had certainly nothing to offer him in compensation for the disadvantages, real and imaginary, of his childhood. The stirring events in the great world outside, the Revolution of 1848, did not, however, pass him by ; they provided the stimulus which made him conscious of his poetic talent.

"The times", he says, "were very agitated. The February Revolution, revolts in Hungary and elsewhere, the Slesvig war—all this had a mighty and maturing influence on my development, however

¹ G. Gran, *Henrik Ibsen : Liv og Verker*, Kristiania, 1918, I, p. 11.

incomplete it long remained. I wrote ringing poems of encouragement to the Magyars . . . to hold out in their just fight against tyranny; I wrote a long series of odes to King Oscar urging him to set all trivial considerations aside, put himself undismayed at the head of his army and march to the aid of our brothers on the Slesvig frontier. . . . This did not bring me, from my friends or those who were not my friends, more than the ambiguous advantage of being greeted by the former as a source of involuntary amusement, while the others regarded it as in the highest degree inappropriate that a young man in my subordinate position should busy himself with things on which they themselves did not venture to have an opinion. I owe it to the truth to add that my behaviour in various ways did not justify any great hope that society could reckon on my adding to the civic virtues; and I made enemies, by epigrams and caricatures, of many who deserved better things from me, and whose friendship I prized. On the whole, while storms raged without, I found myself on a war footing with the little society in which I was placed, hemmed in by the conditions of life and environment."¹

But he was determined not to remain at drug-mixing all his life; he set his heart on passing the *examen artium*, which would open to him the gates of the university and a career in medicine. And so, burning assiduously the midnight oil, he worked hard to acquire the necessary knowledge. In preparation for the examination in Latin, he was obliged to study Sallust's account of the Catilinarian conspiracy, and Cicero's orations against Catiline; and the idea suddenly occurred to him that Catiline would make an excellent hero for a tragedy. So he set to work. The drama, like his studies, was necessarily the labour of the night hours, a reason, he humorously suggests,

¹ Preface to the second edition of *Catilina* (*Catilina. Drama i tre akter. anden og gennemarbejdet udgave*. København, 1875, pp. 5-6).

why most of its scenes take place by night. It was finished in the spring of 1849. Ibsen had confided in two devoted friends of his own age, two young custom-house officers, and the trio built lordly castles in the air of what they should do—a journey to the East!—on the proceeds of the tragedy. One of these friends copied out the manuscript, and so conscientiously that none of the many dots and dashes was omitted with which the young poet had punctuated his inspiration; while the other friend, Schulerud, took it to Kristiania and delivered it to the theatre. Their hopes ran high; and then the unexpected happened: the theatre returned the manuscript. Nothing daunted, Schulerud offered it to publishers, and when none could be found to print it, without being paid to do so, he nobly footed the bill himself. *Catiline, Drama in three Acts*, by Brynjolf Bjarme, appeared in April 1850, a week or two after the young author had himself come up to the capital; and he had the satisfaction of seeing it in the windows of the bookshops. But in spite of a certain interest in the play in student circles, very few copies were sold; and the critics who deigned to notice it found it immature, and its verse defective. Their judgment is hardly to be gainsaid; Ibsen is not one of those dramatists who begin their career by startling the world with a work of conspicuous distinction. To us now, *Catiline* is mainly interesting as the first work of a writer of genius; it stands for the first cotyledons of the stately tree that was to be.

What could have tempted the young and isolated apothecary of Grimstad to write a drama, and, when he did try, how are we to explain even the moderate level of success he achieved? The Norwegian literature of Ibsen's youth was not without models of dramatic composition: the great poet Wergeland had written dramas, undramatic in their irrepressible lyric fervour, but still something on which our young poet could build; and the Danish poet

Oehlenschläger loomed large on the horizon of those days. But Ibsen had, if I am not mistaken, a nearer incentive, which was neither Danish nor Norwegian. A young, inexperienced poet, groping his way to the light, rarely ventures to dramatize a theme without some assurance that the subject is suitable for dramatization; he needs the moral support of a predecessor. Now there was one European drama of Catiline which might have given him this assurance: I mean the tragedy by Alexandre Dumas and Auguste Maquet, produced in October 1848. Ibsen's critics tell us that he did not know this worthless product of the Dumas literary factory; and I admit it is difficult to see how, in an isolated little Norwegian town, he could have known of it. If, however, we will consider without prejudice how Ibsen has welded the refractory and sparring materials, which he found in Sallust and Cicero, into a tragedy, and, in particular, how he has grafted on to these materials an emotional conflict in which the hero stands between two women—there is, of course, absolutely nothing of this in the Roman writers—it is difficult to believe that he had never heard of Dumas' tragedy. Fulvia—Ibsen originally called his Furia by this name, which she bears in Dumas' tragedy—and Aurelia stand in the forefront of both dramas. In both dramas the merest hint of the historian that Catiline had, among his many crimes, that of an intrigue with a priestess of Vesta, is made a corner-stone of the plot. The supernatural element also appears in the last acts of both plays. This comparison certainly does not carry us far, but far enough to allow us to find here Ibsen's justification for dramatizing his conviction. He did not share, he himself tells us, the view of the old Romans about Catiline, but felt the latter had been entirely at the mercy of his opponents, and was resolved to put him in a more favourable light.¹ In

¹ Cp. Preface to *Catilina*, *ed. cit.*, p. 7.

the eyes of Sallust and Cicero, Catiline was an adventurer, and a traitor to his country; in reality, the young poet would have us believe, he was a martyr and a victim; a man who had clear vision of the rottenness of his age, but was too much its child to succeed in reforming it. Ibsen's *Catilina* is essentially a personal drama, a drama built round the problematic nature of the hero; but it is also a revolutionary drama in which rebellion against the existing social order finds approval. It was, in fact, like Dumas' play, an immediate product of the Revolution of 1848, and is the only Norwegian work in which that Revolution has left its precipitate.¹

A more unmistakable foreign influence on Ibsen's *Catilina* is that of the German "Sturm und Drang". It could hardly have been written without Schiller's *Robbers*. Ibsen's Catiline is another Karl Moor, and his relations with his fellow-conspirators are those of Moor with his robber-band. *The Robbers*, however, offers no hint of the chief nerve of Ibsen's tragedy, Catiline's relation to the two women. But here again, Aurelia and Furia might well have been suggested by the gentle Maria and the daemonic Adelheid in Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen*; while Catiline, in his vacillation between them, is not unlike Goethe's Weislingen.² In the end, however, the only value of *Catilina* for us to-day lies in the fact that it contains the germs of so many themes which Ibsen was to develop later: the conflict between the will to achieve and the power of achieving, between longing and attainment; above all, that paralysing distrust of self which was to sap the energy of so many of Ibsen's heroes.

In the spring of 1850 Ibsen went up to the capital to obtain his final "cram" for his student-examination; he failed in Greek and arithmetic, and, as he

¹ Cp. Gran, *op. cit.*, I, p. 21.

² Cp. J. Wiham, *Ibsen und das deutsche Geistesleben*, Reichenberg, 1925, pp. 8 ff.

did not take the examination in these subjects again, he was never entitled to become a university student. But in Kristiania he rapidly made friends among young *littérateurs* and politicians, particularly, as might have been expected of the author of *Catilina*, with those who cherished revolutionary views. These young men were all agreed that there was something very rotten in the social fabric, and they had no hesitation in saying so, with the result that two of his political friends were arrested and thrown into prison, while he himself was under suspicion for a time and expected he might share their fate. More important acquaintances for Ibsen's literary development were those with Aasmund Vinje and Paul Botten-Hansen; both were his seniors, and both were of an ironic and sceptical turn of mind. This, no doubt, encouraged the same tendency in Ibsen himself, and helped to mould the poet who was to write *Love's Comedy*. These three young men, Vinje, Botten-Hansen and Ibsen, founded a paper on the model of a Danish journal, *Corsaren*; they called it first *Manden*, then, after the cook in "Valhalla", *Andbrimner*; and it formed the receptacle for Ibsen's poetry and prose at this time.

There is no need to dwell on the productions of these years; they only emphasize what I have already said of the slow growth of Ibsen's genius. Moreover, in his sordid and often desperate struggle to make a living with his pen, he could not afford to indulge that instinct to put himself into what he wrote, which makes *Catilina* still so interesting to us; he had rather to catch any breath of favour the public would vouchsafe him, by adopting the manner of accredited poets like Oehlenschläger and Welhaven. *Andbrimner* came to an end after some nine months; and so desperate was Ibsen's condition that for days he could dine only on a cup of coffee. The sentimental little drama, *The Warrior's Barrow*, in which the North is contrasted with the Italian South, in the romantic

Oehlenschläger way,¹ was his salvation. It interested the famous Norwegian violinist, Ole Bull, who was then intent on establishing a National Theatre in Bergen; and he invited young Ibsen to be its literary director at a pittance of three hundred daler—some £70—a year. Throwing all thought of a university career—if he still cherished any—to the winds, Ibsen went to Bergen in November 1851.

We have not very much information about the years in Bergen. Very harmonious they were not; for this, Ibsen's own shy and prickly nature, not to speak of his poverty, was most to blame; at no time, and least of all in these early days, had he the art of ingratiating himself with his fellow-men. One personal experience was, however, of importance: he fell in love with a very young girl of barely sixteen, Rikke or Henrikke Holst. She inspired a few poems, and contributed the love element, so far as that element is personal at all—which it hardly is—to the dramas of the Bergen period. The shy and awkward youth did not play a very heroic rôle in the affair. He appears to have asked her—and in verse too—to marry him; she begged him to wait. Then her father appeared on the scene, and young Ibsen beat a rather ignominious and faint-hearted retreat. Shortly afterwards she married another. Many years later, in 1885, Ibsen met her again, and asked her if she could see herself in his early work, expecting, no doubt, that she would mention Eline, the young heroine of *Dame Inger of Östrot*. She wittily replied that the only one of his characters in whom she could trace a resemblance to herself was the wife of Pastor Straamand in *Love's Comedy*, with her bevy of children and her eternal knitting!²

It was part of Ibsen's contract with Ole Bull that he should write one play for the Bergen theatre every year; but his main business was to prepare and

¹ Oehlenschläger's *Væringerne i Mikkilagaard* seems to have been the most probable model.

² J. Paulsen, *Samliv med Ibsen*, Copenhagen, 1906, p. 126.

superintend the entire repertory of the theatre. And this meant hard work, for the population was small, and the plays could only be performed two or three times. Performances were given twice or three times a week, and in all a hundred and forty-five pieces were produced during his connection with the theatre. More than half of these were French, Eugène Scribe, the acknowledged master of the theatre of those days, being represented by no less than twenty-one. In the summer following Ibsen's appointment, Bull sent him, with some £24 in his pocket, to Denmark and Germany, to acquaint himself with the development of the theatre there. He spent six weeks in Copenhagen, and about the same length of time in Dresden. We should like to know a little more about his experiences on this journey, for it must have meant much for his development. In Copenhagen he made the personal acquaintance of the leading Danish critic and dramatist, J. L. Heiberg. In Dresden he saw the famous actor Dawison play *Hamlet*. A particular gain was his acquaintance with Hermann Hettner's little book on *The Modern Drama* which had just appeared. This book seems ineffective enough to us now, but it played an important rôle in its day by checking the flood of Schiller imitations in Germany; and it certainly helped Ibsen to see light in the matter of the historical drama. Hettner's demand for a historical tragedy that should be true to history, and at the same time hold the mirror up to the poet's own time, struck a responsive chord in him.

Of Ibsen's Bergen dramas only two have passed over into the canon of his works: *Dame Inger of Östrot* and *The Banquet at Solhaug*. Three others have been resuscitated in his posthumous writings, but they are quite unimportant, and did not get beyond Bergen.

Dame Inger of Östrot was performed on January 2nd, 1855, had no great success, and did not reach the

theatre of the capital until twenty years later; but it was published in 1857. *Dame Inger* is essentially a drama of the pseudo-historical kind made popular by Scribe; theatrically effective, it shows scant consideration for historical facts; but this was pardonable, as the period and the personalities it deals with are but dimly illumined by historical records. And there are, of course, echoes of Oehlenschläger. While Ibsen's advance in the direction of living portraiture is still slow and halting, we cannot be blind to his growing power of weaving into historical happenings and personalities his own spiritual experiences and conflicts. In fact, Ibsen was rapidly discovering that as Hettner had taught him: "Historical tragedy is essentially psychological tragedy." In speaking later of this drama, he made the remark that he had never written anything merely because it was a good subject, but only when it embodied some personal mood or situation. This might still be largely a pious aspiration, but he was clearly beginning to see that in this direction alone lay salvation. Into *Fru Inger* he had put his own broodings on his life-calling. "It was", she says, "the intention with me that I should have been the sign of the Lord God over the kingdom. But I went my own way. That is why I had to suffer." "Woe to him who has a great calling in life and not the strength to fulfil it!"¹ Behind *Dame Inger of Östrot* there is already that something—call it Fate, or what we will—something that does not always, in Ibsen's doubting mind, make for righteousness—a fate of which the people in his plays are so often the plaything.

The Banquet at Solhaug and *The Warriors at Helgeland* are the beginning of Ibsen's preoccupation with the saga, his fight for a new and truer presentation of the

¹ I quote the text of the first sketch of the drama (Act V, sc. 9, and IV, sc. 3) (*Samlede Verker*. Hundreårsutgave ved Francis Bull, Halvdan Koht, Didrik Arup Seip, II (Oslo, 1928), pp. 226, 198).

old heroic world than that of the Danish romanticists. The former play, *The Banquet at Solhaug*, is still essentially a romantic drama, and it is interspersed with lyrics. Contemporary opinion insisted that it had been inspired by Henrik Hertz's drama *Svend Dyring's House*. Ibsen himself in his preface to the second edition (1883) denied indebtedness, and I think he is right. There is little historical realism in *The Banquet at Solhaug*; but if the characters fall out of their historical rôles, this is due less to a relapse into romantic conventionality, than to the grafting on to them of Ibsen's own personal outlook on life. He had yet, however, to learn how to weld his subjective experience with history. The conflict of the individual with society, which was to become so strong an obsession with him in after years, begins to emerge; the woman's right to live her own life is foreshadowed in Margit, as, of course, it could not have been in any woman of her historical period; and Bengt is a very modern problematic character, suggesting even so subtle a figure as Tesman in *Hedda Gabler*. Ibsen this time had his reward; produced in January 1856 in Bergen, and some months later in Kristiania, *The Banquet at Solhaug* was a popular success—his first: and the first of his plays to reach the theatres of Copenhagen and Stockholm. It is his sunniest, happiest drama, the only one, indeed, calculated to win the undivided plaudits of an ordinary theatre public. There was, however, one fly in the ointment: the hostility of the critics. Björnson alone raised his voice in praise; and with this friendly appreciation began a friendship between the two men which, although subject to many vicissitudes and long breaks, is one of the most interesting in the literary history of the North. But even Björnson gave Ibsen dubious satisfaction; for in spite of all his warmth, he denied the young poet dramatic power: Hertz, he said, in what seems to us now a strangely oblique judgment, was the great dramatist, Ibsen the

lyric dreamer! This was the first of Björnson's failures to understand his friend's genius, an inability which, as we shall see, punctuated all the after years of their friendship.

The six years—from his twenty-fourth to his thirtieth year—which Ibsen spent in Bergen, controlling the fortunes of a living theatre, were the best possible apprenticeship which any dramatist could experience. Their significance is to be seen in the rapid advance in Ibsen's art from *The Warrior's Barrow* to *The Banquet at Solhaug*; in the ever more skilful blending of the technique of Scribe with the poetic drama of Danish provenance. But before Ibsen left Bergen he had taken another great step forward; he had completed the tragedy I have already mentioned, *The Warriors at Helgeland*. This was his first revolutionary achievement; his challenge to the Romantic art of Oehlenschläger and Hertz, and to the Romantic outlook on life and poetry generally; it is, in fact, his first contribution to the movement which was subsequently to be described as naturalism. He had begun the drama in verse, but ultimately turned to prose. *The Warriors at Helgeland* is a kind of *Cromwell* in the theatre of the North. The critics were, of course, convinced that Ibsen ought not to have repudiated the Romantic poetry to which they were accustomed; what he had substituted for it, they said, was mere raw brutality. His drama was certainly not the saga, resplendent in many-hued poetic sentimentality, that they knew. And Björnson, too, failed to understand; he ranged himself with the majority, and proclaimed Ibsen's way of dramatizing the saga emphatically not the way to do it. To show how it ought to be done, he published his own saga-drama *Lame Hulda*. A comparison of the works is, I think, in the eyes of the twentieth century, the best possible vindication of Ibsen's new art; with the passing of the sentiment of the Romantic age, *Lame Hulda* has ceased to interest us much. Björnson's

sunny and essentially major and optimistic mind was, in truth, ill at ease in the sombre tragic night of early Northern civilization; while Ibsen, always prone to see life from its darker side, possessed the "open Sesame" to it. His cold, cruel eyes were able to understand men and things of the old time more clearly as they were. *The Warriors at Helgeland*, although Björnson and his friends could not see it,¹ was a far more significant step towards the consummation they had both passionately at heart, the liberation of the Norse National Theatre from the leading strings of Denmark, than anything yet written.

Ibsen used to be accused by his critics of having, unnecessarily, and to the disadvantage of his work, departed from the familiar story of Sigurd and Brynhild in the *Volsungasaga*; of having warped the saga by introducing into it alien motives and details. It was deplored that he should have wilfully thrown away the opportunity of writing a Nibelungen drama which might have borne comparison with the great German dramas of Hebbel and Wagner. But to write such a drama was at no time Ibsen's intention. His Sigurd is not Sigurd Favnesbane, and his *Hærmændene paa Helgeland* is no Nibelungen drama. Rather is it a skilfully woven dramatization of a number of Norse family sagas, to which the *Volsungasaga* was merely contributory. If Ibsen abandoned the mellifluous beauty of the Romantic drama, he put a new and very precious thing in its place: namely, clear-cut, convincing character-drawing; he peopled his work with personalities who, although without the polite varnish of civilization, were yet instinct with modern life. The bridge which Hettner had demanded was here thrown from the past to the present; the continuity of the nation's life

¹ How distasteful all Ibsen's early work was to Björnson is now clear from his correspondence with the Danish critic, Clemens Petersen. (Cp. for example, Björnstjerne Björnson, *Brev. Første Samling, Gro-Tid. Brev fra årene 1857-70.* utg. av H. Koht, Kristiania, 1912, I, p. 54 ([November 1857] pp. 75-6 (March 5th, 1859)).

vindicated. Hjördis is the heroine of a barbaric age ; but she is also the progenitor of the long line of modern women-figures in Ibsen's later work.

In 1858, when *The Warriors at Helgeland* appeared in print, Ibsen had been settled for more than a year in Kristiania ; he left Bergen in the summer of the previous year to assume the directorship, at a salary of 2,400 crowns (about £135), of the little Norwegian Theatre in the capital, which had been established in opposition to the essentially Danish Kristiania Theatre. For the second time, Kristiania proved Ibsen's tragic fate ; the seven years he now spent in the capital were fuller of disappointments, of pin-pricks and privations than his previous stay there. Life, it is true, had become more complicated, in that, before leaving Bergen, he had found in Susanna Thoresen his future wife ; his marriage—considering his debts and his very uncertain prospects, surely a rash step—had taken place in June 1856. The theatre to which he had been appointed was a struggling concern with small resources. Ibsen's talent for stage-managing was no greater here than it had been in Bergen. He found himself in constant friction with its business manager. As the pittance he received was rarely paid in full, and never punctually, his economic struggle to make ends meet was harder than ever. Ultimately, in 1862, the theatre failed altogether, and Ibsen found employment in the larger Kristiania Theatre. In all these troubles his wife proved a valiant helpmate ; his marriage may have been foolish, but, had it not been for her, and his old friend Botten-Hansen, his life would have been insupportable. Nor had he the satisfaction, which might have lined the cloud with silver, that he was making headway as a poet ; there was no question of a growing recognition of his genius, and this indifference was the hardest of all to bear. In 1860, when the government gave Björnson and Vinje travelling grants, Ibsen was overlooked. Can

we wonder that he should have acquired a permanent antipathy to Kristiania, which led him, for the greater part of his life, to regard it with hostility? In the order of the world, such adversity and humiliation seem to be the necessary preparation of the tragic poet; all the accumulated sufferings of this time were to find their expression later in the ruthlessness of *Brand*. But in these years Ibsen's genius was gradually emerging, and we have no better testimony to it than two poems which stand out as conspicuous milestones in his own struggle for personal freedom: *On the Heights*, written in the winter of 1859-60, which in many ways foreshadows his *Brand*; and the admirable ballad of *Terje Viken*.

Not the least of his disappointments was the failure of a comedy which, sketched in 1860, if not earlier, was published in 1862: *Svanbild*, or, as he ultimately entitled it, *Love's Comedy*. Although in verse—he had begun it in prose—*Love's Comedy* is a modern comedy of Kristiania society. Here Ibsen tapped that satiric vein in himself which had been swollen by the bitterness of his own existence in these years; but there was too much satire in it to make it palatable to the public of the day. And indeed, it is a little withering and shrivelling in its denial of that most cherished *eidolon* of the theatre, romantic love; to all appearance, it is a flat repudiation of love as the basis of marriage. But if we turn to a book which gave Ibsen much to think about, both now and later, Camilla Collett's novel, *The Sheriff's Daughters*, published in 1855, we shall find, I think, that there was something more behind Ibsen's handling of his theme than satire. Fru Collett's book is a rather old-fashioned but still readable novel, and is concerned with the inadequacy of the avenue to marriage provided by society. Although she is eloquent in her repudiation of the *mariage de convenance*, and in her plea for love and free choice as the right basis of marriage, this is not exactly

the moral that is to be drawn from her story. When her heroine ultimately marries, without love, an elderly widower, instead of the hero of her youthful adoration, the reader is left with the unromantic reflection that she has done the wise thing. Now this is just what happens in Ibsen's *Love's Comedy*. It may be very distressing to romantic readers ; but might not Ibsen, in making his heroine repudiate her lover, Falk, have looked at the matter very much as Fru Collett did ? Possibly, too, such some thought about the vanity of romantic love may have crossed his mind when he chose Susanna Thoresen as his own bride. In point of fact, Falk in the play is not a very eligible suitor ; we are inclined to suspect that he might have turned out a kind of Helmer, if not even a Peer Gynt. Ibsen perhaps saved his Svanhild—although his purpose may still not have been clear to him—from the fate of Nora in the *Doll's House*. In the satire of the comedy we seem to hear the first rumblings of the coming storm against the false foundations of society : the discord between the real and the ideal. *Love's Comedy* met with little favour ; it was judged to be lacking in poetry. The English reader, although he may only know the play in Professor Herford's admirable translation, will hardly subscribe to that opinion.

Amidst all his adversities, Ibsen was finding his feet. The turning point, and the only bright episode in these drab years of struggle, was a musical festival which took place in Bergen in the summer of 1863. Ibsen wrote the festival poem and was honoured on all sides. This gave him confidence in his powers, and when he returned to the capital, he took up an older plan of a drama on the two rivals for the Norwegian throne in the thirteenth century, Haakon Haakonsson and Skule Baardsson. This is the theme of *Kongs-Emnerne*, literally the "stuff of Kings" or, as we call it a little colourlessly in English, *The Pretenders*.

The new drama is much truer to history than *Dame Inger* had been. Haakon's mother, when the drama opens, successfully submits herself to the ordeal of carrying the hot iron in proof of her son's right; and his kingly nature and bearing win him the support of the Ting. He is chosen king. To his older rival Skule, he entrusts the great seal, gives him, with the rank of *Hertog*, rulership over a third of the kingdom, and makes Skule's daughter Margareta his queen. But ambition will not let Skule rest; he stirs up civil strife in support of his claim to the throne. At first, not unsuccessfully; but he is ultimately defeated and brings down upon himself the wrath of the people. In the centre of the conflict stands Bishop Nikolas, a veritable Mephistopheles of evil, a full-blooded romantic evil-doer. It is he who instils doubts in Skule's mind of Haakon's right and calling; it is he who whispers of a mystery surrounding Haakon's birth. A letter from the only man who knows, a priest, disclosing whether or not Haakon is Inga's real son, has come into Nikolas's hands; and this letter he has sworn to hand to Skule before he dies. His death approaches. If Skule learns the contents of the letter, is convinced of the falseness of his suspicion, it will mean the end of Skule's pretensions. For Skule is a noble, loyally minded man; and he will loyally accept his fate. But to bring peace to the troubled kingdom is not Nikolas's wish, even in his death hour. Obedient to his oath, he hands the letter to Skule, giving him to understand that it is a list of his enemies. Then, pretending to repent of his betrayal, he begs Skule to spare them by committing the list to the flames. Thus the secret of Haakon's birth remains a secret, and the gnawing doubt is unsolved. The motive of the letter recalls those early days when Ibsen was still under the domination of Scribe; but so clarified and ennobled has the motive become that I doubt if any modern reader or hearer thinks of Scribe at all. Nikolas is one of

the darkest figures of dramatic poetry ; but a figure drawn with a power which shows that Ibsen had read his Shakespeare attentively. I know of few more impressive death scenes in the literature of the theatre than that of Bishop Nikolas in *The Pretenders*.

But the real spiritual kernel of the drama is the antithesis of the two pretenders. They stand to each other as do Aladdin and Nureddin in Oehlenschläger's drama of *Aladdin*. The kingly Haakon, happy, confident and strong, is the born ruler of men, the man on whom fortune smiles, the Aladdin into whose turban the oranges drop unsought. "The happiest man", says Nikolas, "is the greatest man. The happiest man achieves the greatest deeds—he whom the demands of the age seize like flames. They create in him thoughts which he himself does not grasp ; they point out to him the way which he follows and must follow, until he hears the exultation of his people and recognizes in surprise that he has achieved a mighty work." Haakon is, and knows himself to be, the bearer of a great mission ; no vacillation darkens his purpose ; he knows what he wills to do, and what he wills, he knows he can achieve. He possesses the "kingly thought". And Skule? Skule is the eternal doubter—doubter of himself, doubter of his life's purpose. He steals his rival's "kingly thought", as Nureddin steals Aladdin's lamp ; he gives it out as his own, and perishes by his lie. "I am hated by heaven", he says, "because I have abandoned the calling which was laid upon my shoulders."

Contemporaries felt that behind this tragedy of the "stuff of kings" lay a subjective motive : Ibsen's own relationship to Björnson. Björnson was a Haakon nature ; he was one of those great optimistic souls who—

. . . never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would
triumph . . .

Ibsen, on the other hand, was a Skule—and, as we shall see, never more a Skule than at the end of his life, when the ghosts of his dead past woke again. But too much, I think, has been made of this motive of the rivalry between Ibsen and Björnson. Ibsen's life-blood flows, not only in Skule, but in Haakon too.

In the meantime his ill-fortune seemed to have passed; his pessimistic self-distrust was over; the sun was breaking through the clouds. Ibsen had learned, he too, to think the "kingly thought"; he felt confident that he had found his "calling".

It is fascinating to ask: could Ibsen have known another great European drama which depicted, perhaps less vigorously, but with finer psychological delicacy and subtler poetic beauty, two other great rulers, King Ottokar of Bohemia and Rudolf of Hapsburg: Grillparzer's *King Ottokar's Fortune and End*? It is, indeed, improbable, for Grillparzer was still, in the 'fifties, an undiscovered star in the European firmament. But I think I am not exaggerating when I claim that *The Pretenders* is worthy of a place beside the three greatest historical tragedies of the north of Europe since Schiller's death: Kleist's *Prince of Homburg*, Grillparzer's *King Ottokar*, Strindberg's *Master Olof*. *The Pretenders* was Ibsen's first European achievement.

2. BRAND, PEER GYNT AND JULIAN

LAST week I dealt with Ibsen's apprenticeship to his art: to-day I have to turn to the Ibsen of achievement. Before he left Kristiania in 1864, there had been added to his personal tribulations a deep concern for the darkening political situation in Europe. The warmth with which he had taken up the idea of Scandinavian solidarity and unity had received a chilling douche, with the refusal of Norway and Sweden to fight shoulder to shoulder with their Danish kinsfolk in the unequal struggle against Prussia and Austria; thus, to his accumulated grievances against his fellow-countrymen was added bitter resentment that, in the hour of Denmark's need, they had shown what he regarded as pusillanimity and calculating opportunism. The grant of the Storting, however, had made it possible for Ibsen to turn his back on it all. In April 1864, he left Kristiania for Rome, travelling by way of Vienna and Trieste, a journey which, with every hour, opened up new visions of beauty and wider horizons. In Italy Ibsen attained, for the first time, spiritual freedom, "self-liberation"; it was as if he had at last emerged from a long tunnel into the sunshine. The darkness and confusion in which he had hitherto lived were behind him; and the worrying and gnawing thoughts of the bankruptcy of the Scandinavian idea, Norway's betrayal of the Danish cause, were kept at sufficient distance to allow him to regard them objectively. As he began to build up his life anew, there gradually emerged into consciousness a great positive mission, a "calling", a crusade against the lies and the falseness that pervaded the life of civilization. This mission first crystallized

in the symbol of Pastor Brand. With the dramatic poem of *Brand*, Ibsen at last attained the heights, heights that no one, even among his enemies, could seriously call in question. That sudden "finding of himself", the surprising outburst of matured power which had produced *Kongs-Emnerne*, here rises to magnificent fulfilment.

Brand is in many ways the most symbolical and abstractly unreal of all Ibsen's works; and yet, we seem to be better informed concerning its fact-bases, the sources of its ideas and its genesis, than in the case of any other. The starting-point was an excursion on foot, which Ibsen undertook in the summer of 1862, across the Sognefjeld to the Fortundal. A pastor's family which he came upon, living precariously under a cliff at Hellesylt in the mountains, provided the general situation; and an old peasant woman at Lom was a model for Brand's mother. But the poem had older foundations than this. The figure of the hero himself, and the atmosphere of religious intensity which envelops him, were memories of Pastor Lammers in his native town, who, when Ibsen was a boy, led a pietistic revolt against the state church. A still nearer model seems to have been a painter, H. C. Knudsen, who came to Bergen in 1854 when Ibsen was there. He was a broken man, with a mentally deranged wife; he passed through a spiritual crisis, and travelled about the country preaching, ultimately to lose his life in a snow-storm.¹ The nameless types of Norwegian communal life, who form the *staffage* of the drama, may go back to equally old memories, while it seems not improbable that the figure of Einar, as first conceived, was suggested by the devoted friend of the poet's early days, Ole Schulerud. Later, in Rome, Ibsen found a model—possibly mingled with memories of Henrikke Holst—for his Agnes, in a Norwegian girl, Thea Brunn, who was a victim to consumption and whose early death filled him with

¹ S. Høst, *Ibsens diktning og Ibsen selv*, Oslo, 1927, p. 131.

grief; while this girl's brother, Theodor Brunn, a young pastor, provided additional traits for Brand himself. Over and above this, Ibsen put more of himself, at least of one side of himself, into his work than he had yet ventured to transfer to poetry. "Brand", he said—and he did not often make such confessions—"is myself in my best moments."

Brand holds the mirror, in a way that needs no proof, to the ideas of the time. Uppermost is the obsessing thought, which had already left traces on *The Pretenders*, of Norway's defection from Ibsen's cherished dream of Scandinavian unity.

"What has been decisive and significant for me", he wrote in one of his letters from Rome,¹ "is that I got to a sufficient distance from our own conditions to see the hollowness behind all the invented lies of our so-called public life, and the pitifulness in all the personal phrase-mongering which always has plenty of words when it is a question of 'a great cause'; but which never possesses the power, the will, or the sense of duty for a great deed. How often do we not hear the good people in Norway talking of Norse discretion with complacent satisfaction! And nothing more is really meant by it than that lukewarm, medium temperature which makes it impossible for the capable soul to commit a folly in the great style. It cannot be denied that the crowd is well drilled; there is uniformity in it, which, in its way, is exemplary: step and time are the same for all. Here, in Italy, you may believe me, it is different!"

Brand is a drama with a purpose, in an even more definite sense than any of the dramas of the poet's later life; and that purpose was to sting, by satire and persuasion, the Norwegian people out of its lethargy, its spiritual sloth, its faint-hearted "halfness". Although Pastor Brand is primarily concerned with the faltering religious faith of his people, his words

¹ *Breve fra Henrik Ibsen* udg. av H. Koht og J. Elias, Copenhagen, 1904, I, pp. 102 f. (quoted by Gran, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 165 f.).

reflect the spirit of the political speeches of the time in Norway, urging the nation to take part in the Danish war.¹ The poem was intended to be a tonic, and it actually was a tonic, for the national will.

Interesting is the controversy as to how far Ibsen was influenced in his conception of Brand by the philosophy of Denmark's greatest thinker, Søren Kierkegaard. Ibsen himself denied any indebtedness; but, as we have seen, it was always his way to meet the prying of the curious with such denials. For a poet, a living figure, such as in this case Pastor Lammers, or the artist Knudsen, is always a more tangible source than an abstract idea; and to Ibsen these living figures certainly meant more than Kierkegaard's philosophy. In the fifties and sixties of last century, however, Kierkegaard's invigorating individualism was in the air in the north; Lammers was himself probably affected by it, and Theodor Brunn certainly was. In any case, there is so very much of Kierkegaard's ruthless antagonism to the moral flabbiness of the age in *Brand*, that it seems futile to argue that this thinker had no share in Ibsen's creation. Moreover, it must be remembered that Ibsen insisted that the theme of *Brand* was no narrowly religious one; if Brand happened to be a priest, it was only, Ibsen said, because the struggle of his soul could thus be more effectively and poignantly depicted.² And what is the ultimate theme of *Brand*? It is: the truth or the lie; which shall prevail? The truth *must* prevail at all costs, even if these costs involve the destruction of its champion. "I or the lie, one of us must yield," Falk had cried in *Love's Comedy*. And here Brand: "All or nothing!" No compromise! No half measures! Now there was no more earnest ethical conviction in Kierkegaard's mind than this. And thus *Brand* does represent the first full resonance of Kierkegaard's thought, in the poetry of the north.

¹ Cp. Justus Bing, *Henrik Ibsens Brand*, Kristiania, 1922, pp. 47 ff.

² Letter to Georg Brandes, June 26th, 1869 (*Breve, ed. cit.*, I, p. 188).

Brand was originally planned not as a drama, but as an epic—suggested perhaps by Paludan-Müller's *Adam Homo*; just as its spirit certainly has something of that writer's great spiritual drama, *Ahasverus*. Some sixteen hundred verses of the epic *Brand* have been preserved, and were published in 1906, after Ibsen's death. The composition however proceeded slowly and with difficulty; but one day, in the summer of 1865, Ibsen happened to take refuge from the heat of the sun in St. Peter's, and the idea here suddenly flashed upon him to write his *Brand* in dramatic form. Then, in the course of six months which were spent mainly at the little town of Ariccia, and writing with an ease he had not known before, he finished the drama.

But before it could be published, Ibsen was plunged once more in despair; for to his hopeless economic difficulties was added illness, and serious illness. Fortunately, however, it was the dark hour that precedes the dawn. *Brand* was published in March 1866, and had a success such as Ibsen had not hitherto known. No work created such a stir in the North before, or after, until it was eclipsed by the world-interest awakened by *A Doll's House* in 1879. This success at once reacted on Ibsen's economic situation, and that not merely by the large sales. The hard heart of the Storting of 1866 at last relented; his stipendium was increased to 3,000 kroner, and granted him for life.

Brand was the right book at the right moment. It dropped into an age of shallow literature like a thunderbolt from heaven; it spoke with the holy earnestness of the old prophets, and stung into life the religious consciousness of his people. Professor Herford has aptly compared its effect with that of Carlyle upon ourselves earlier in the century.¹ And indeed, Ibsen was an awakener who went out, as we

¹ Introduction to his translation of *Brand*, in *Ibsen's Collected Works*, ed. W. Archer, III (London, 1906), p. x.

shall see, from premisses very similar to Carlyle's ; both owed their life-blood to the stimulating individualism of the old Romanticism ; both had inherited the noble ethical idealism of Fichte ; both were fighting in a life-and-death struggle against the all-levelling collectivism with which the great German thinker Hegel had crushed the old Romantic individualism. With *Brand* Ibsen was at last recognized as one of the great poets of his nation ; the past, of neglect and indifference, was atoned for.

Re-reading *Brand* in these days—more than sixty years after its appearance—it is not altogether easy for us to recapture the first fine rapture of that long past time. I must confess I have a difficulty in recalling my own feelings when I first read, and also tried to translate, *Brand*, some forty years ago. It has not, I fear, worn by any means as well as its sister-poem, *Peer Gynt*. To us now, it stands as a poem belonging to a definite age ; it is not, in the big sense, a timeless poem that appeals to every time ; it expresses a mood which, for better or worse, has passed. It may be for the worse that in things of the spirit we see more tolerantly than our fathers, that the note of religious intensity has gone out of the intellectual life of Europe ; but we have inevitably to reckon with this fact. And if we view with a certain objective indifference the spiritual contents of *Brand*, we have also a more critical eye for its literary qualities. I am not sure whether there is even clearness and consistency in the character of Brand himself. At one time, it would seem as if his mission, his “ calling ”, were to make religious faith a reality in human hearts ; at another, he is thundering against the lack of personality in the men and women with whom he comes in contact. We are left in doubt whether Brand's ultimate goal is the realization of God or the realization of self.

There were not wanting, even sixty years ago, critics who cavilled at the lack of flesh and blood in this ruthless symbol of “ all or nothing ”. And yet,

the late Professor Gran, writing in 1918, still tells us that Brand is the most living figure in Norway's literature. If we accept this dictum, it can only be with the proviso that a living figure in the realm of art is not always a living figure in an ordinary human sense. In this respect, and before a European tribunal, Peer Gynt has surely more of the life eternal of great creations of the brain than Brand. Brand is essentially a symbol, an idea embodied in human form ; a very living and vital idea, it may be, but hardly a convincing living figure.

To me, and I think to all of us now-a-days, there is another aspect of Ibsen's *Brand* which we would rather dwell upon, an aspect that links it up with the work of Ibsen's later period. Might we not see the real tragedy of Brand, not in the heroic struggle of his unconquerable will against untoward forces, but in a fatal defect of his own character ? May it not be that his ruthless unwillingness to compromise, or to let those whom he loves compromise, far from being a stern virtue in the eyes of God, is a crime—the greatest of all crimes against the Holy Ghost, the crime of lovelessness ? Ibsen may not have thought this thought to the end here ; but as his life drew to a close, the conviction, as we shall see, grew upon him that the only thing that matters in this world of ours, the only real bond between man and man, is love—charity. Brand has committed the crime of John Gabriel Borkman : he has killed the love-life in human hearts. And even now, in *Brand*, lack of charity appears in the Romantic *volte face*, to which the drama owed much of its popularity, but which puzzled and perturbed many of its contemporaries. The God Brand has worshipped is the Jahve of the Pentateuch, the jealous, avenging God of the old prophets ; and in the dramatic *peripeteia* with which the tragedy closes, he hears from the voice in the thunder that this God, on whom, with his inhuman demand for "all or nothing", he had set his faith—the God of his

ice-church—does not exist at all. The only God is a *Deus caritatis*.

And might we not go still further? Is there not in *Brand*, too, that element of fatalism which was never far absent from Ibsen's interpretation of the world—we saw it in *The Pretenders*—that shifting of personal responsibility from the individual to the world-consciousness? Does this fatalism not lurk in the background here, too? *Brand* is a tragedy of lovelessness; but a lovelessness that is conditioned by hereditary forces, by psychological causes lying beyond the control of the individual will. Brand had known no love in childhood, no love to be paid back in kind to his own mother; and even where his wife Agnes is concerned, his love is but a hollow phrase, a subordinate interest in his life, without holy warmth or conviction. Here, too, as in so many of Ibsen's tragedies, the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children.

But whether we accept or not such an interpretation of the main thesis of *Brand*, I must not leave the tragedy on a negative note. There is poetry in *Brand*, great poetry, the poetry of fell and dale, of mist and snow, the poetry of Norway's sternest natural beauty; not the Romantic sunny Norway which Björnson loved to paint; but a grim reminder that ice and snow, and darkness, contribute more to the moulding of the nation's character than warmth and the sun. The poem is, above all, inspired by a buoyant and uplifting enthusiasm for the majesty of the human will fighting against adversity, the will which moves mountains. *Brand* is the legitimate successor and fulfilment in Norway's literature of that great spiritual poem *Creation, Man and the Messiah* by Wergeland, and of *Norway's Dawn* by Welhaven.

Peer Gynt, the poem that succeeded *Brand*, was written extraordinarily rapidly, between January and October of the year 1867; for the most part, on that idyllic isle of poets, Ischia, and at Sorrento. It

appeared in the November of the same year. In spite of this rapidity of composition, *Peer Gynt* shows more signs of changing plan and growth than *Brand*. One feels that Ibsen, when he first planned it, may have contemplated a different development and conclusion from those which he ultimately gave it. The first three acts are deeply rooted in the popular folklore of Norway. In Asbjörnson's *Norse Fairy Tales and Sagas* Ibsen had read of a Peer Gynt who was "a proper braggart and forger of lies, who told you the oldest stories as if he had himself played a part in them". In particular, he found here Peer's adventure with "den store Bøjg" (the great ogre) who compels Peer to "go round", as well as suggestions for the other supernatural elements in his drama, and for the bluntly humorous manner in which they are handled. But *Peer Gynt* has a longer literary lineage than this: Oehlenschläger, in what is (in spite of its theme) his most nationally Danish drama, *Aladdin*, had given northern literature a hero whose will-power is dwarfed by his imagination; and Paludan-Müller, in *Adam Homo*, had satirized the temporizing philistine; while a scene in Heiberg's *Soul After Death* may have suggested Peer's encounter with the button-moulder. Ibsen has embalmed the adventures of Peer Gynt's youth in delightful poetry, and given them as background a panorama of Norwegian scenery to which it would be difficult to find a parallel. To dig after hidden meanings and didactic applications in Peer's stories of fictitious adventure, his theft of another's bride, his meeting with Solvejg, and, above all, his relations to his mother Aase, and the exquisite apotheosis of Norwegian folklore, where Peer drives his dying mother in imagination to the castle of Soria Moria, would be the purest sacrilege. At most, when Peer finds his way to the kingdom of the Dovre king, and in his adventures with the "Bøjg"—symbol of the negative principle in our souls, cowardice, indecision, paralysis of will-power—one feels the presence of

allegorical purpose and abstruser meaning. We begin at last to understand Peer; perhaps, indeed, the poet himself only now begins to attain full understanding of all that his creation involves. Peer flees, when his unheroic delinquencies have made things too unpleasant for him, flees to the mountain trolde; and their sordid cavern is gilded by his pliant and luxurious imagination to a lovely palace; the trolde-king's ugly, green-clad daughter becomes in his eyes a fairy princess. There is a deep poetic significance in these fantastic scenes—at once repellent and fascinating—significance, and also satire. For it is in the world of the trolde that Peer loses his soul; here he comes to the great decision, which most mortals take less spectacularly, to sacrifice his better self to worldly advantage. Hereafter Peer lives in conscious egotism and selfishness, as he had hitherto lived instinctively in them; he has learned to evade realities; to "go round", not to "go through". But more subtle and far-reaching implications begin to emerge: the disintegrating effect of a shirking, pleasure-loving, will-less temperament on human personality. And the idea assumes ever greater proportions as the drama progresses. Ibsen gives us here, as it were, the psychological key to those adventures which he had depicted with such delightful, naïve freshness in the earlier part of his drama. Peer has no trace in his composition of the "all or nothing" spirit. Duty and responsibility do not exist for him. Of the sacrifice of self for ends outside self, whereby Brand had risen to tragic greatness, he will hear nothing; he will live for himself and for his own personal ends alone. From all that is disagreeable in life he shrinks, choosing always the easy compromise, the primrose way. He will be himself, and himself alone. The theme of *Peer Gynt* is egoistic self-sufficiency; and this, Ibsen insists, is the deadliest of all enemies of human personality.

Clearly, this Peer Gynt is the very greatest possible contrast to Pastor Brand. And, just as in Brand's

case, Ibsen shows, too, how Peer Gynt suffers under the burden of heredity. His father, the rich Jon Gynt, had been very much like Ibsen's own father; his mother, we suspect, had similar traits to Ibsen's own mother. The upbringing of the child had forced him to take refuge in an imagined world. And to gain a firm footing in that world, he has had to build his life upon the lie. *Brand* had been the tragedy of overweening will; *Peer Gynt* is the tragedy of weakness of will. But *Peer Gynt* is not merely a contrast picture to *Brand*; it is, as it were, the reverse of the medal. If the one play was an example to Norway of how, by devotion to a high ideal, she might attain salvation, the other held the mirror up to her people, showing them as Ibsen saw them, and as they should not be. Both *Brand* and *Peer Gynt* want to be themselves; *Brand* chooses the way of renunciation and sacrifice, and finds his soul; *Peer Gynt* the path of self-indulgence and compromise, and loses it. *Brand* rises to superhuman personality and moral strength; *Peer Gynt*, in his self-sufficiency, cannot be either thoroughly good or thoroughly bad, and is in the end not good enough for either heaven or hell; into the button-moulder's ladle he must go, to be melted down and formed anew. It is thus not the "being oneself" of *Peer Gynt* that kills, but his way of being himself. If we will realize ourselves, Ibsen seems to say, we must never lose sight of that something not ourselves, which alone gives substance to personality—responsibility, a "calling"—and only through sacrifice to our calling does our life receive its full content. The will to achieve this, to live and sacrifice for an end not ourselves, to fulfil our "calling", the mysterious mission of our existence, is all that matters. Thus the poetic idea of *Peer Gynt* has a more universally human application than that of *Brand*. Few of us are made of the stuff of which *Brand* is made; but everyone has something in him of *Peer Gynt*. We have all of us a considerable dose of egoism in our constitution; we

strive instinctively, whether we admit it or no, to realize ourselves by being sufficient unto ourselves. We all practise the art of compromise, of going round, when the great "Böjg" confronts us, instead of—quixotically like Brand—fighting our way through. We do not trouble much about our "calling", and are all in danger of the ultimate melting-pot.

But to return to the drama. After Act III there is a great hiatus. When we next see Peer, he is a middle-aged man; he has a life of the most varied adventure in America behind him. He has been a seal-hunter at Hudson's Bay, a gold-digger in California; and ultimately he has amassed a fortune, first as a slave-dealer, then by selling idols to the Chinese, and—to salve his conscience—exporting missionaries to convert them. One is inclined at first to put these adventures in the same category as the lies and imaginations of the first act; but Ibsen himself gives us no hint that they might possibly be only such. That Peer has acquired wealth is not to be doubted. When we meet him again, it is on the coast of Morocco, in the company of four parasites, an Englishman, a Frenchman, a German and a Swede, a situation which gives Ibsen opportunity for plentiful satire. These gentlemen steal Peer's steam yacht, which, in apparent response to Peer's appeal for aid to God, promptly blows up. "God", Peer reflects, "is fatherly disposed towards my person, but economical. He certainly is not." Peer is now alone in the desert. He will create a new kingdom in the Sahara, the land of Gyntiana, and reign in its capital Peeropolis as emperor. He falls in with Arabs who take him to be a prophet; and a dancing-girl, Anitra, plays a similar rôle to that of the Dovre king's daughter in Peer's earlier adventures in a fantastic dream-world. At last he comes to Cairo, where he is crowned emperor—emperor of himself—in a madhouse, a madman among madmen. Ibsen has been censured by his critics for these scenes in which satire and fantasy run riot; it

is certainly difficult to bring them into harmony with what has gone before. All these wonderful adventures are poetically irrelevant to the story of the braggart Norwegian peasant; they might have come out of a different work altogether. The Peer to whom they introduce us, the successful commercial speculator, is not the Peer we have known; *he* had surely not the power of "going through" to enable him to become an American Croesus. We look wistfully and regretfully back to the fresh, delightful world of the folk-tale, in which Solvejg had been won and lost, and Mother Aase had made her immortal journey to Saint Peter. We should like best to be told that Ibsen meant this long fourth act as a kind of dream interlude, in which the only reality is that brief glimpse we are vouchsafed, of a middle-aged woman in a hut in the forest, high up in the north, sitting and watching for the real Peer, while the Peer of the nightmare is being crowned Emperor of himself in the Cairo madhouse. This little scene tempts me, as last week when we were considering *The Pretenders*, to draw a parallel between Ibsen and the great Austrian poet, Franz Grillparzer, who, if his work was known to Ibsen, could not but touch sympathetic chords in him. I think of that exquisite little break in the dream-play of *Der Traum, ein Leben*, in which Grillparzer for a moment introduces reality, to remind us that his hero's dream is but a dream.

In Act V, Peer, now an old man, comes back to Norway. Shipwrecked on the Norwegian coast, he saves himself in ruthless egoism, when he and the ship's cook are clinging to an upturned boat. And now the avenging nemesis overtakes him: in symbol and allegory the deeds he had shrunk from doing, the thoughts he had not thought, the tears he had not shed, the songs he had not sung—they whirl as balls of thread and withered leaves in the wind; it is the nemesis of the eternal "going round", and never "going through". The fantast who had spent his life egoistically seeking to be himself, who had imagined

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he had won an empire, discovers, when he meets the button-moulder at the last cross-road, that he has neither an empire nor a self. This time there is no going round. His soul has no stamp of personality upon it at all; it is fit for no better fate than the melting-pot. Only in the waiting Solvejg's heart has the real Peer Gynt been enshrined and preserved: the great Peer Gynt that might have been. Here was the empire he had missed, the only empire that matters, the empire built on self-sacrificing love. Peer's fantastic life was one long evil dream; the Peer of Solvejg's dream is the reality. Thus Peer is saved by Solvejg, as Goethe's Faust by Gretchen.

Such then is this northern Faust, the greatest and richest poem of modern Norway. But *Peer Gynt* was by no means received in the north with the acclamation that had greeted *Brand*. The Danish critic Clemens Petersen reviewed it in a way that showed no understanding for its meaning or its beauty. Ibsen's wrath was stirred, and he wrote a letter of bitter indignation to Björnson, whom he suspected, I am afraid not altogether wrongly, of sympathizing with Petersen's attitude. For once, this most reserved and buttoned-up of poets gave vent to his feelings. "My book *is* poetry," he declared, "and if it isn't, it shall become poetry. The idea of poetry in our land, in Norway, will have to adapt itself to my book." He threatens reprisals; he will turn photographer, and show his enemies up in their true colours. And indeed his next work, *The Young Men's League*, was a satiric comedy; but as this drama opens a new phase of Ibsen's work, that of his modern social dramas, I should prefer first to consider the third of the trio of great poetic dramas, namely, *Emperor and Galilean*, which did not see the light until 1873.

As a matter of fact, *Emperor and Galilean* is older in its beginnings than *Brand*. The plan of the drama goes back to the summer of 1864. All through Ibsen's Roman years he studied assiduously and read widely

about Julian the Apostate and his time ; but the actual composition of the work did not begin until he settled in Germany. It went through many changes, before, in October 1873, it appeared as a drama in two parts. Thus we might say that *Emperor and Galilean* was the labour of not far short of ten years of the poet's life.

On none of his works did Ibsen expend so much pains as on this ; and in none had he himself so much faith ; it was to be his masterpiece. " This book ", he wrote in July 1871, " will be my chief work ; it occupies all my thought and all my time. That positive conception of the world which my critics have so long demanded of me, they will find here."¹ But can we resist the conclusion that it is his only failure, his least living drama ? The reasons for this failure are not obscure to us to-day. First, there was the initial difficulty of the theme. To crowd a great world-happening, such as the conflict of the new Christianity with the old heathendom, into two dramas, was in itself an almost insurmountable task. Hebbel, it is true, had let his dramas play against the spacious background of such grandiose conflicts ; but Hebbel's metaphysical mind was able to avoid the concrete detail in which Ibsen lost himself. Still, we have in *Emperor and Galilean* the first point of contact between the two greatest dramatists of their age, Hebbel and Ibsen ; and it was not, as we shall see, to be the last. The more Ibsen read about Julian the Apostate and his time, the more details he felt compelled to crowd into his pages ; so that often the poet is ousted by the historian, the speech of poetry by the speech of prose. And the drama is written in prose, not, like *Brand* and *Peer Gynt*, in verse. There is too much historical realism in *Emperor and Galilean*. Another disadvantage was the length of time for which the theme had engaged the poet's attention. Had he completed it, as he once hoped to do, in 1865, it would assuredly have been more closely knit and consistent ; for

¹ Letter to Frederik Hegel, July 12th, 1871. *Breve, ed. cit.*, I, p. 231.

between 1865 and 1873 Europe was shaken by historical events which could not but leave their precipitate on this tragedy; the rise of Germany, under Bismarck's leadership, to power, and the religious strife of the "Kulturkampf". And just in these years Ibsen had drunk deep at the well of German metaphysics.

Neither *Brand* nor *Peer Gynt* had been a historical drama; they had been free fantasies of the imagination, in which the puppets danced to the poet's tune. They had been tragedies of the will—excess of will-power in the one, defect of it in the other; they had been, above all, concerned only with the individual and freely-moulded fates of their personages. Why did Ibsen, in this new drama, impose upon himself the restraint of historical fact? Perhaps *Emperor and Galilean* was an experiment with the life-philosophy demonstrated in those works, a putting of that philosophy to the test of an actual historical happening. In what relation, Ibsen, caught in the net of the Hegelian "Geschichtsphilosophie", seems to have asked himself, do will and character in the individual stand to the "world-process"? And the longer he meditated over this problem, the more inclined he was to fall back on a fatalistic solution. The new thought—and yet it was not altogether a new thought, for it may be seen struggling for expression in *The Pretenders* and even in *Dame Inger*—the thought emerged, that our human will is not free, that we are all bound by a necessity; that we only will what we are obliged, by a power outside ourselves, to will. We are enmeshed in a web of circumstance; our lives are but the working-out of a predestined course; we are tools in the hands of a great outside force, call it destiny, God—what we choose. "I believe", says the sage Maximos, "in free necessity." Free-will is but the dream of the philosophers and the necessary premiss of the theologians; the only will that exists in the world is the world-will, of which the individual is but

the instrument. These thoughts were undoubtedly nourished in Ibsen's mind by the Hegelian philosophy, and its development by those called his disciples of the left, and also by Schopenhauer. Again, they establish a contact with Ibsen's German predecessor Hebbel, whose historical dramas were one long grappling with the relation of the individual to the world-will.

Julian's historical mission is to regenerate Christianity; and he achieves this mission by virtue of his apostasy. Like a Mephistopheles, he wills evil, but achieves good. Against his will, he establishes the Christian faith; by his hostility to the Galilean, he completes the victory of Christianity over Hellenism. This is the ethical kernel of the tragedy; like Cain and Judas Iscariot, who appear to him in a mystic vision conjured up by the sage Maximos, Julian is one of the "corner-stones under the wrath of necessity", or, as Maximos calls him, "a sacrificial lamb of selection".

It is difficult for us to take the same human interest in Julian, entangled thus in historical necessity, as we could take in Brand or Peer Gynt; and our interest is still further weakened by the difficulty of reconciling the young Julian, a fascinating dramatic figure, tossed like a shuttlecock between the hedonism of the old faith and the asceticism of the new, with the Emperor Julian of the second drama, who is crushed by the poet under the burden of historical realism. Moreover, the second drama is much inferior to the first; we suspect that Ibsen was growing weary of his task. From the beginning, every reader looks forward to the great climax which he knows must come: "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!" but how strangely ineffectual it is when it does come! Paralysed, as it were, by his historical fatalism, Ibsen seems to miss the chief dramatic opportunity of his world-tragedy. Julian is very far from being as finely drawn a figure as Skule, or Peer Gynt, or even Brand. But he has a little of all of them in his composition: it is just *their* tragic failings that bring him to his doom.

He is a self-doubter and a vacillator like Skule ; his will to achieve is nullified, like that of the heroes of Grillparzer's tragedies, by his inability to set his will through. He has his full share of Peer Gynt's monstrous egoism and vanity ; like Peer Gynt he is intent on willing only his own ego, on being himself ; and hereby he is untrue to himself. The egoism of the Emperor goes down before the altruism of the Galilean. And once again, like Falk or Brand, he cries : " Life or the lie ! " But instead of trampling under foot that lie—the lie of self-seeking, self-indulgence, superstition—he makes it the corner-stone of his faith, and perishes as its victim. The " all or nothing " of the Galilean triumphs.

The pivotal idea of the whole tragedy is contained in Maximos' doctrine of the three kingdoms, which bears upon it the unmistakable stamp of the Hegelian philosophy :

There are three kingdoms (he says) ; first, that kingdom which was founded on the tree of knowledge ; then the kingdom which was founded on the tree of the Cross. The third is that great kingdom of mystery, which shall be founded both on the tree of knowledge and on the tree of the Cross ; for it hates and loves them both, and has its living sources under Adam's grove and under Golgotha.

The third kingdom shall swallow up both Emperor and Galilean ; in it, the child and the youth shall grow to manhood. " Logos in Pan ; Pan in Logos. Emperor in the kingdom of the spirit ; God in that of the flesh : that is the third kingdom."

And it is this kingdom that Julian is called upon to establish—to establish both on freedom and on necessity ; the kingdom that has to be achieved by willing—willing what must be willed in the great foreordained design of the world. Julian fails to achieve this, his calling, and, in failing, achieves it.

" Thou knowest ", says Maximos, " I have never approved of what, as Emperor, thou hast undertaken to do. Thou wouldst turn the youth into a child

again. And now the kingdom of the flesh is swallowed up by the kingdom of the spirit. But the kingdom of the spirit is not the final one, just as little as the youth is the last stage in the development of the man. Thou wouldst hinder the youth from becoming a man. O, thou fool, who hast drawn the sword against coming things—against the third kingdom, where the two-edged sword shall rule ! ”

Emperor and Galilean may be poetically the weakest of Ibsen's dramas, but it is spiritually the deepest ; in none has he revealed more of his own most intimate thought on the problems of human destiny than here. And the ideas of this grandiose tragedy dominated all his later life. Threads go out from *Emperor and Galilean* to all the dramas of his maturer years ; we see the figures of these dramas, one and all, struggling to solve the problems of their life-calling ; we see them crushed by the awful doubt whether they have any “ calling ” at all, whether they can grasp—to use Hebbel's expression—the spokes of the world-wheel ; whether they are “ children of God ” with a mission to fulfil, or “ children of the world ” with none that matters. All, like Julian, grope towards the light ; all crave for the sunshine and the great joy of life ; all seek to realize their third kingdom. And to none, not to Nora Helmer, or Helene Alving, not to Rosmer—although Rosmer is vouchsafed perhaps the clearest vision of any—not to Solness or Allmers, not even to Rubek, is the third kingdom ever more than a glimpse of the promised land, seen from a high mountain when the mists suddenly and momentarily part. They all, like Nora, wait and watch for the miracle—the miracle that never happens. But faith in the ultimate realization of the third kingdom—a kingdom of sweetness and light, without the asceticism either of Kierkegaard or Carlyle—is the rock to which Ibsen, amidst all his doubts and self-distrust, steadily clung. “ Du skal grunnfaeste riket ”—“ Thou shalt establish the kingdom ! ”

3. THE DRAMAS OF SOCIAL CRITICISM

THE Ibsen I described a week ago—the Ibsen of the great poetic works, *Brand*, *Peer Gynt*, *Emperor and Galilean*—I called the Ibsen of achievement; but it was, in the first instance, an achievement within the framework of his national literature: the Ibsen who is to engage us to-day is the European Ibsen.

With *The Young Men's League*, which, as we have seen, was prompted by the petulant resentment of the poet at the coolness with which his great imaginative flight, *Peer Gynt*, had been received, there began a new phase in Ibsen's dramatic work. "You will not have me a poet," he said; "now I shall be a photographer." This romanticist, who had just produced a masterpiece of poetry, which in its exuberant imagination and romantic irony would have delighted the heart of the early German Romantic School, throws—to all appearance, at least—romanticism to the winds, and becomes what we now like to call a realist.

In 1868 Ibsen had settled in Germany, in Dresden; at last independent of money troubles, he utilized his independence, as Professor Gran says, "to go into his workshop and lock the door".¹ Ibsen's life ceases, after about 1870, to have any very great interest for the biographer; beyond the bare record of where he lived, or spent his summers, and the plays he published, there is, indeed, little to say. He lived for his work, and would have as little to do with the outside world as possible. This reserve is hardly relaxed in his letters; chance visitors, especially of the celebrity-hunting order, he would not tolerate,

¹ Gran, *op. cit.*, I, p. 202.

and even friends he regarded as a dubious luxury.¹ Nor do the sparse facts that have to be recorded concerning his movements matter much; whether in Dresden, or München, or Kristiania, whether he took his holidays in the Tyrolese mountains or in Norway, he went on writing plays of Norwegian life and conditions, quite uninfluenced by his surroundings, and just as if he had never left his native land. Surely there never was less of a cosmopolitan at heart than this European Ibsen, who imagined that he would stifle if forced to live in the narrow world of his own fatherland.

Much need hardly be said about *The Young Men's League*, although of all his plays it appears to have enjoyed the greatest stage popularity in Norway itself. It is a not conspicuously original piece of conventional intrigue, and is not so interesting as *Love's Comedy*. A play of provincial political interests—its scene might, in fact, be Ibsen's own birthplace, Skien—it could hardly, even if it were better than it is, be expected to make much appeal to an outside public. It was written in Germany, and critics, tracing in it the flavour of "Knackwurst" and beer, have sought models for it in the German comedy of the day, the most obvious being Freytag's *Journalists*, where politics divide, as here, the characters of the play into two opposing groups. But there is more French influence than German in *The Young Men's League*; the plot moves in French fashion by the machinery of chances and misunderstandings. Dumas fils and Augier had by this time supplanted Scribe in France, and the stage machinery is more successfully disguised. The characters of Ibsen's play, however, still live only a kind of artificial stage-life—they are cut out of Norse cloth with the scissors of the French tailor—and belong to the days when the footlights provided an impenetrable barrier against the contamination of life as it is. The hero, Stensgaard, is a kind of Peer

¹ Cp. letter to Georg Brandes, March 6th, 1870. *Breve, ed. cit.*, I, p. 197.

Gynt in society clothes, an egoistic opportunist, and a political phrase-maker; he finds himself, against his intention, hoisted on to the democratic platform; and he has no compunction in deserting to the opposite side—this is the pivot round which the plot turns—when he sees it to be to his advantage. The main interest of the play for us to-day is that germs are to be detected in it of the better things that were to come. Here Ibsen opens his campaign against society; intones the watchword of the next three dramas: "Death to the lie of society!" It is these dramas that I propose to deal with this afternoon.

In 1874 Ibsen paid a visit to Norway, the first since he had left it in 1864. And in April 1875, he moved from Dresden to München, which remained his home until 1891, with only one considerable break when he again took up for a time his abode in Rome. In 1891 he definitely settled in Kristiania. Ibsen loved the art-metropolis of Bavaria, and although neither its art nor its theatres seem to have had much influence on his work, it must be put to the credit of this city that his world-fame was there established.

That world-fame begins with *The Pillars of Society*, which was completed in 1877. This play enjoyed a great popularity in its day, and stands, now that we are able to view it in a historical perspective, for a very definite turning-point in the evolution of the European—or, at least, of the North European—drama. Its vitality and validity have now passed, but it is still effective on the stage, and well worthy of careful attention. It is the starting-point for Ibsen's new art.

Again Ibsen introduces us to the society of a provincial Norwegian town—this time, quite definitely Skien—and proceeds, in an effectively constructed plot, to strip its "pillars" of the feathers in which they strut; to show that their vaunted public service is nothing more than hypocritical self-interest. The central figure, Consul Bernick, the chief pillar, has risen to quite considerable respectability and wealth;

he has given the town all its modern improvements, and is the chief promoter of the railway, now approaching completion, which is to link it up with the capital. In short, Bernick is introduced to us as a very exemplary pillar indeed. But he has committed the same great sin which Peer Gynt committed, of only being sufficient unto himself, and in consequence false to his true self. Unlike Peer Gynt, however, he is, in the traditional manner of comedy, brought to see the error of his ways. In a theatrically effective, if psychologically somewhat specious, speech to his fellow-townsmen, he makes a clean breast of his misdeeds; and the curtain falls leaving the average playgoer with the comfortable feeling that this reprobate—for he has quite considerable delinquencies on his conscience—is a reformed man. Bernick has been led to admit, with engaging frankness, that the true pillars of society are not he and his like, but “the spirit of truth and freedom”. The women, it should be noted—and especially Lona Hessel, who, like Dumas’ “étrangère”, Mrs Clarkson, returns with disconcerting ideas from the traditional “free” America of the French theatre—the women are the discoverers of this truth, not the men. All this is, from the theatrical point of view, very pleasing, but it is not the way things happen in life. I imagine few of us now-a-days are very much convinced by Bernick’s sudden change of heart.

At the time when it was written, however, *The Pillars of Society* had considerable actuality. Plimsoll in England had just been revealing the iniquities of shipowners in sending their vessels to sea, as Bernick does, in an unseaworthy condition. This was a matter in which Norway was naturally much interested. Another motive, that women have more capacity to be pillars of society than men, came from the agitation initiated in the North by Camilla Collett, who, grown bolder since her novel, *The Sheriff’s Daughters*, had continued the fight for the better

appreciation of women's place in the world. In a book entitled, *From the Camp of the Dumb*, which is mainly concerned with the rôle of women in books, she had quite frankly appealed to Ibsen to be their champion. "The sad figure of our womanhood", she said here, "is now sitting waiting for the wizard who, with his staff, shall give it back youth, health and strength; and this wizard, this liberator, is no other than Ibsen." Again, a Swedish lady, Anna Steen, had also been moved to make a strong protest against the injustices under which her sex laboured; and it is, in fact, suggested that Anna Steen was the actual model of Ibsen's Lona Hessel. This may well have been so.

Thus with *The Pillars of Society*, under the influence of Georg Brandes' proclamation—which left so deep a mark on the Scandinavian mind—that the vitality of literature depended on the measure with which it brought living problems under debate, Ibsen enters his period of modern "thesis dramas". In those of his earlier time he had also dealt with problems, but it was a question there of problems of the individual ego. Now, however, the accent is laid on the outside forces hostile to the freedom of the individual; and this antagonism forced Ibsen into taking sides. He cannot withhold his sympathy, or conceal that sympathy from reader or hearer; he sides clearly with the rebels of *The Pillars of Society*, who repudiate the "lie of society"; his sympathy is with Nora, not with her husband; with Fru Alving, and, of course, with Dr Stockmann in *An Enemy of the People*. At the same time, as we shall see immediately, Ibsen never allowed the artist in him to be submerged in the advocate. He liked to insist that it was his business, as a poet, to set problems, not to solve them; and he himself believed that he had never done more than set the facts of a case before his public, leaving them to draw their own inferences and conclusions. This was, no doubt, in a considerable measure true; and

with every succeeding drama it became truer. The facts and experiences of life gradually gained the upper hand over the thesis, until, in *The Wild Duck*, his partisanship is altogether disguised, not to say confused.

Now-a-days, we are more interested in the artist in Ibsen than in the ideas for which he fought; the all-important fact is that, with *The Pillars of Society*, he began to write a new kind of drama, which has left a deep mark on the evolution of dramatic form. We have seen this new art developing. At an early stage, his need for psychological truth had made demands which the traditional form of the drama could not satisfy. It is true, the French drama, since Scribe, had made a great advance towards a correlation of drama and life, by reducing the elements of chance and surprise on which the intrigue of the earlier comedy largely relied; and Ibsen learned from both Augier and Dumas fils. But his more immediate model for *The Pillars of Society* was not French but Norwegian. The play was a direct challenge to Björnson's drama *A Bankruptcy*, produced a couple of years before. Björnson was too good a liberal and democrat to stress the lie of society, and his play is concerned with the unmasking of a much less equivocal pillar of society than Consul Bernick; but Ibsen clearly learned from him.

It has often been observed that the dramas of Ibsen's later period are all linked together in a kind of logical sequence: each work seems to have been suggested by, and to have grown out of, its predecessor. The campaign against the lie of society had been prepared in *The Young Men's League*; and from the web of that drama and of *The Pillars of Society* Ibsen selected a number of threads for his next work. Selma Bratsberg had complained, in *The Young Men's League*, that she had not been allowed to participate in her husband's troubles. "You dressed me", she says, "like a doll; and you played with me as children play with a doll."

And in the later drama the younger women protest against the subjection of their sex. Says Dina Dorf: "I will not be a thing that is taken."—Out of these motives Ibsen wove his new drama, *A Doll's House*.

No play of Ibsen's—and, indeed, no other European drama of the later nineteenth century—made so profound an impression on the world as *A Doll's House*, which appeared in 1879. Its immediate fame, or notoriety, was, of course, due less to its intrinsic excellence as a play than to the idea that it was alleged to advocate: the equality of the sexes, and the independence—then much reprobated—of women. The story of how Nora Helmer discovers that she has all her life been treated—first by her father and then by her husband—as a doll, and how, in her first serious clash with the realities of life, she leaves husband and children, walks out of her doll's house in order to learn how to transform herself from a puppet into a responsible human being—all this was construed as an "attack" on the sanctity of marriage. To Ibsen's dismay, his play was, moreover, associated with the movement which had already set in, in the north, for the political emancipation of women; and for this movement he had anything but sympathy. In point of fact, he was not fighting at all for women's rights, as they were then called, but merely carrying on his campaign against "the lie of society"; furthering the faith that lay deepest in him, the faith in the eternal validity of human responsibility, whether in man or woman, which he saw impaired by social conventions.

The revolutionary character of *A Doll's House* has been, as is always the case with revolutionary achievements, exaggerated; people overlooked the fact that it was the successor of a steady movement towards the recognition of individualism, which in Europe had set in with the Romantic movement, and was given definite form by that fantastic but stimulating French preacher of a new religion, Saint-Simon. This had already been voiced in French literature by Balzac and

George Sand, and found expression, in 1840, in Hebbel's first great drama, *Judith*, then with growing poetic strength and beauty in his *Herod and Mariamne* and *Gyges and his Ring*. The idea of *A Doll's House* was thus not new; and still less was it new to Scandinavia. Foreign criticism, when the play appeared, was unfair to the contribution which had been made to the problem by the North itself. Criticism of marriage as a social institution had already begun with the novel by Camilla Collett; and I have just mentioned that lady's later work, *From the Camp of the Dumb*; while in Sweden, besides Anna Steen's agitation, the well-known writer Almquist had, in his still exceedingly readable little story, *Det går an* (*It can be done*), which created considerable sensation in its day, given signs of rebellion against the tyranny of the marriage tie. Thus, like all significant works, *A Doll's House* was not so much a pioneer work as a product of its time; it brought to a focus ideas which were agitating men's minds.

Most instructive light is thrown on the genesis of *A Doll's House* by a comparison with Ibsen's original draft of the play.¹ From this we see that it was originally planned as a very grim tragedy, and had been suggested by an incident of which Ibsen read in a newspaper; in this first plan Nora, after the fashion of the French drama, passed like a tragedy-queen out of the picture, to kill herself. It was thus meant to be essentially a "problem-tragedy", solved after the fashion of Dumas fils; the thesis was to have been relentlessly pressed home. Remains of this tragic plan are still left over—not, I think, to the advantage of the play—and they jar a little on the later note. Dr Rank, the victim of hereditary disease, for instance, was originally introduced to show another and very serious aspect of the "lie of marriage", its neglected responsibility to future generations. Rank was conceived as a "raisonneur" of the kind familiar to

¹ *Efterladte Skrifter*, ed. cit., II, pp. 325 ff.

us from Dumas—the “raisonneur” of *L'Étrangère* is a doctor—and Rank's function in the play was to point the moral with an appeal to Darwinism. So seriously tragic a personage was hardly in place in the final *Doll's House*. Ibsen subsequently modified and whittled down the rôle; but one feels that Dr Rank might, at least in respect of his disease, have disappeared altogether. Again, Nora's counting of the hours she has still to live was originally conceived as an effective preparation for the tragic close; and it is, of course, still acceptable as a comedy-effect. Many lighter touches were introduced into the drama which are absent in the first form; there was no tarantella scene there, with its effective symbolic sequel of Nora changing her masquerade dress for the dress of every day, before she goes out into the world of realities. Ibsen has not altogether succeeded in eliminating the tricks of the French theatre; there are still coincidences that make us wince, and the part played by letters, dropped opportunely in the letter-box at critical moments, shows that there was still something left in him of the old Adam, Scribe. But the technical advance over *The Pillars of Society* is very great indeed. The characters are much more delicately and naturally drawn, and the purpose or moral of the play is relegated to the background. In the first draft there was no doubt about that purpose, no doubt, either, on which side Ibsen's own sympathies lay; but in the completed play he has made a determined effort to present life as it is, to distribute the lights and shadows over his characters so that we are not always sure on which side *our* sympathies should lie. Nora has plenty of little failings that lessen our sympathy for her; and Helmer is far from being the reprehensible egoist who would have been most serviceable to drive a thesis home. The truth is, as Ibsen's figures take on life, they live their own lives, in spite of the doctrine they were originally created to prove. Life, as it were, has become too strong for him; and that is

the best of all tributes we can pay to the poet in him. The tragedy becomes a comedy, or something very like a comedy, in spite of the famous slamming of the door. There is more than we used to think in the hope, thrown out at the end, that the miracle will happen, that Helmer and Nora will ultimately discover how a life together may become a real marriage. We are left with just a little glimpse of Ibsen's third kingdom.

Once *A Doll's House* was off his hands, Ibsen seems to have been undecided in which direction to pursue the disturbing ideas he had stirred up in that play. In one plan he thought of providing a constructive solution to Nora's problem, by writing another comedy which should show, without any disconcerting unpleasantness at the close, under what conditions a true marriage could be achieved. Possibly this would have soothed the ruffled minds of his contemporaries; but with the unanticipated indignation awakened by the *Doll's House* ringing in his ears, he was in no mood to placate the many-headed monster of the public. Instead, he seemed to say to them: "My good people, you have been shocked by my criticism of the conventional marriage, a marriage built upon the lie; instead of sympathizing with my revolting Nora, you think that she did the wrong thing in repudiating her false marriage. Very good! Now I will show you what tragic consequences a marriage of which *you* would approve may entail. I will show you a noble woman who has fulfilled faithfully all the demands of marriage, who has not revolted, and who lives to see her beloved son, for whom she has made every sacrifice, go down into the night of insanity." Such was the origin and purpose of *Ghosts*, which was published in 1881. The plan of a constructive marriage drama was not carried out until years later, in *The Lady from the Sea*.

A Doll's House had awakened controversy, but this was feeble compared with the torrent of reprobation

which greeted the new drama. The late Mr Archer culled from the newspapers of the time an anthology of enlightened English opinion about *Ghosts*, which Mr Shaw has preserved for us, like a fly, in the not very translucent amber of his book, *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*. Continental peoples, taking literature and the theatre more seriously than we were prepared to do in the eighties, did not behave in quite so unmannerly a fashion; still, *Ghosts* was everywhere regarded as beyond the pale of respectability. The indignant protests which greeted it in its day are a little incomprehensible to us of the twentieth century; and the thought that rises to the mind of most of us now is, how could a Europe, which for centuries had looked up to the *Oedipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles as a model and exemplar of dramatic poetry, take such umbrage at Ibsen's drama, which in theme, technique, and intense moral earnestness, had an undeniable kinship with the old Greek drama. But the fashions and tastes of past times are always difficult to understand.

Let us begin by looking at the technique of the drama; for here Ibsen first attains full mastery of his new art. That technique might be described in a word as one of retrospective disclosure. To inform an audience concerning the essential antecedents of a dramatic fable had always been a difficult matter for the dramatist. In the childhood of the drama—in antiquity, and in the middle ages—this had been achieved by the crude and unnatural method of narration; messengers or heralds were employed to acquaint the audience with matters which the dramatist had no room to represent. Later, in the great age of French classicism, and beyond, it was managed by means of conversations with confidants; or, in comedy, by the gossip of servants. The oldest and at the same time the most long-lived of all such expedients was the soliloquy. Ibsen, who made greater demands on the exposition of character than

his predecessors, had no room for the luxury of subsidiary and uninteresting personages; nor would he employ soliloquies. He attained his end more naturally by an ingenious and progressive process of self-revelation in the characters themselves. This was his most significant contribution to the technique of the drama.

A German critic, Dr Emil Reich, who has written one of the few excellent books on Ibsen, has instructively reduced Ibsen's *Ghosts* to a conventional drama of the old type. In Act I of such a drama, he says, Helene would renounce her love for the young clergyman, Manders, in obedience to the behests of her mother and aunts, and become the wife of the handsome Lieutenant Alving. In Act II the young wife would flee from her dissolute husband to her old love. He, however, would induce her to sacrifice herself and renounce; and she would return to her husband. In Act III we should be shown Helene Alving at her child's cradle; after apparent reform, Alving has fallen back into his old dissolute courses. In Act IV Helene would discover his relations with her own maid, Johanna. This insult gives her the courage to make her escape; but she sends Oswald away, to spare him the final reckoning between his father and mother. Lastly, in Act V, the widow would lose her beloved son. Thus *Ghosts* is really a tragedy which extends over some thirty years of its heroine's life; and yet this is all concentrated, with a marvellous skill, in the stage traffic of a few hours; and adapted, without offence to our sense of the natural and the probable, to the strict interpretation of the French law of the unities. The movement of the play is punctuated, not so much by happenings, as by successive revelations of the past. It is, says Dr Reich, as if Sophocles had begun his *Oedipus Tyrannus* long years after Oedipus himself was dead, and only Jocasta remained with the children whose father is her own son.

Amidst the storm of controversy and vituperation which *Ghosts* stirred up, its wonderful technical excellence was overlooked ; and even in respect of the subject of the drama, its critics displayed a strange lack of understanding. It was at once branded as an impossible tragedy, whose theme was the horrible and impermissible one of insanity, the consequence of inherited disease : the visitation on the children of the sins of the father. Our critics seemed to forget that we possessed in our own literature a not unimportant tragedy of a " mind unhinged ". This was, of course, an aspect of the " lie of marriage " in which Ibsen was deeply interested ; he had, in his ingrained fatalism, brooded much over the part heredity plays in fashioning our lives ; we have already seen this in *Brand* and *Peer Gynt*, while Osvald Alving is foreshadowed by the figure of Dr Rank in *A Doll's House*. The medical scientists have, of course, impugned Ibsen's physiology, have riddled it with hair-splitting arguments. But the battle of the poets and the philosophers is always with us ; before the onslaught of medical materialists, no creation of the human brain—such not being conceived as pathological examples—is safe ; Philoctetes, Lear and Hamlet are alike, the doctors will tell us, scientifically impossible. But this kind of criticism—now as always—is beside the mark. Even when scientifically sound (which is by no means always the case) it is largely irrelevant to the creation of the artist. It has been the privilege of the poet, in all ages, to illude, to make us dance to his tune, whatever the philosopher or scientist may say.

Rightly considered—and we are now, after the storms of vituperation have long been forgotten, able to consider the drama calmly—*Ghosts* is not, in the first place, a drama about the mental degenerate, Osvald Alving, but about his mother. It is Helene Alving, not her son, who stands in tragic grandeur in the centre of the picture, like an Antigone or Medea,

or Schiller's fate-bound Isabella. The ghosts of the past, that walk again in the Alving household, do not haunt Oswald, who has been kept in ignorance of their existence, but his mother; they are the ghosts of effete beliefs and outworn conventions, of the false conception of marriage, of the "lie of society". In her young days Helene Alving had respected the dictates of society, had renounced her happiness, belied her better instincts, and married the man of her family's choice. In the critical hour of her discovery that he was an unworthy libertine, she had fled from him, fled to her old lover, now a pillar of the church. Accepting the counsels of this pillar, she does not follow the example of Nora in her doll's house, and go out into the darkness until her marriage can become a true marriage; there is no slamming of the door in the terrible moral tragedy of *Ghosts*. She returns to the dissolute Captain Alving and bears him a son. This son she brings up, as a proper mother should, in respect for his father; she shields him from all knowledge of the truth, and sends him to study art in Paris. She weaves the lie round her marriage, encircles her husband with a halo; and, when he dies, perpetuates his memory by founding an asylum. She does her duty as society demands it from her, the duty Nora—so Ibsen's critics had told him—had shamefully neglected to do. Even the fruit of her husband's amours, Regina, she has taken into her household and brought up as her own daughter. Fru Alving has built her life on a fabric of lies, and Nemesis is not to be placated by lies. The asylum is burned down. "Everything", says Oswald, "will be burned down; nothing will be left to remind us of Papa; I too shall be consumed."

But there is another and deeper personal aspect of *Ghosts*: it is a tragedy of the missed joy of life. The far more essential curse of heredity under which Oswald suffers is not physical disease, but the ego-centric, pleasure-loving temperament of his father—

exactly what Peer Gynt inherited from *his* father. "Has it not occurred to you", Oswald says to his mother, "that all I have painted turns on the joy of life, of light and sunshine and happy mortals?" And to Helene herself comes the thought that, had she been able to bring more sunshine into her husband's life, everything might have been different. This joy of life, round which Ibsen's own thoughts crystallized more and more as the years went on, is our glimpse here of his "third kingdom". There is no joy in *Ghosts*, no sunshine; only rain, rain, pitiless rain falls throughout the piece, and shrouds everything in its gloom. But at the close the sun breaks through; and Oswald, sinking into the night of insanity, cries for it, as the Emperor Julian had cried for it; cries for it as a child for its ball: "The sun, the sun! Mother! Give me the sun!" This is the ultimate tragedy of *Ghosts*: the lack of sunshine, the lack of joy, in an infinitely drab world.

Of literary influences on this drama there is little to say. Ibsen had attained his majority. He had put the machine-made play of the French theatre behind him with an ὕπαγε, Σατανᾶ! He had found his own form. And in a higher degree than in *A Doll's House* he has succeeded here in dissociating himself from his characters, in eliminating "purpose". He himself pointedly asserted that he had taken no sides in the conflict he had created, thus achieving one of the cardinal, if always difficult virtues of the new "naturalism".

The reception of *Ghosts* was not calculated to lessen Ibsen's estrangement from his native land, the only bright spots in the north being Georg Brandes' defence and Björnson's warm vindication of his friend's art; and indeed, the drama long reverberated through Björnson's own dramas and novels. Ibsen's next play, *An Enemy of the People*, was his retort to the critics who had branded him as an "enemy of society" and a literary outlaw.

An Enemy of the People has enjoyed peculiar favour at the hands of our English critics. Its plot is lucidity itself; there is no symbolism or elusive mystification here; and it was, indeed, something of a triumph to captivate the popular ear with a comedy which contains virtually no love-motive. Dr Stockmann brings the community in which he lives about his ears, by proclaiming that the baths, which are the source of the town's prosperity, are pestilent. A very similar incident had actually happened at Sandefjordsbad in 1855, and Ibsen had no doubt read of it in the newspapers.¹ Stockmann thus becomes an enemy of the people, just as did Ibsen himself, when he attacked the "lie of society". The drama is concerned with the downward progress in popular estimation of a champion of the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and his corresponding upward development in spiritual strength and moral individuality. But his material downfall is not unrelieved: a sea-captain, Horster, who sympathizes with Stockmann's stand, and who will, we hope, after the curtain falls, marry Stockmann's brave daughter Petra—the only member of the family who stands loyally by him—comes to the rescue. And thanks to Horster's intervention, the drama ends not too tragically.

It does not need much perspicuity to see that Stockmann is far from being a self-portrait; it has, indeed, been suggested that, in spite of many un-Björnson-like opinions, he has a good deal of Björnson's blustering personality in his composition. Ibsen, in his own fight against the lie, was, frankly, never quite so wrong-headed and impolitic as his hero—he calls him, in fact, a "muddle-headed person"—and we feel that, had he himself been in Stockmann's shoes, he would have achieved his end—which, of course, Stockmann does not achieve at all—more practically. But Ibsen was too good an artist to let

¹ Cp. S. Höst, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

personal polemic spoil his comedy ; and he has made Stockmann essentially a comedy figure.

Technically, *An Enemy of the People* is again admirable ; the construction of the play is masterly in what might be called the ordinary, the conventional manner of comedy-writing. It is a straightforward play, with little or no adventitious aid from that retrospective technique on which he had hitherto relied to give meaning and depth—third-dimensional qualities—to his work. Particularly effective is Stockmann's great speech and final reckoning with his community in the last act. The meeting has been summoned to allow him an opportunity of stating his views on the particular matter at issue : the town's water supply ; but, under the goad of his hearers' taunts, he lets the case go, and launches out into an unpremeditated attack on society, to be swept along almost in spite of himself to revolutionary conclusions. "The majority", he cries, "is always in the wrong ; for, by the time the majority has grasped a new truth, it has become worn out, and is on the highway to becoming a lie!"¹ And, in the end, he reaps the harvest of his revolt in the not very consoling discovery that "the strongest man in the world is the man who stands most alone". There are few set speeches in modern dramatic literature more extraordinarily effective than this. Those of Consul Bernick, and Björnson's bankrupt, are left far behind.

But the writing of *An Enemy of the People* was only an episode in Ibsen's work ; and, with all its excellence, it is hardly to be regarded as one of his major achievements.

The four dramas which I have just been considering represent that stage of Ibsen's activity in which—to use the phrase of Hebbel's I quoted once before—he most effectively grasped the time-wheel, and sought to

¹ For his own conviction that the minority is always in the right, see his letters to Fredrik Gjertsen, March 21st, 1872, and Georg Brandes, January 3rd, 1882 (*Breve, ed. cit.*, I, p. 246, and II, p. 100). Björnson was a confirmed believer in majorities.

influence the movement of ideas. These ideas have long passed into the common possession of mankind ; the battles have been won. The " lie of society " has become a commonplace ; we all agree now with Ibsen about the premisses of a true marriage ; and we no longer recoil in shocked horror at the revelation in *Ghosts* of the consequences of a false one, built upon a lie. In fact, with the help of the new science of psycho-analysis we have gone very much deeper into all these matters than Ibsen possibly could. Only very young souls are still thrilled, as we used to be thrilled, by the slamming of the door of Nora's doll's house, or by the cry of the insane degenerate for the sun. From now on Ibsen abandoned his rôle as a militant reformer of society, as a physician of its ills, as a writer of problematic dramas written with an ulterior purpose. Henceforth he strove to be an artist, and an artist only.

The very first of the new plays, *The Wild Duck*, shows the white flag, as far as " purpose " is concerned. This play, which appeared in November 1884, is one of Ibsen's most puzzling and difficult works, but one of his greatest. To his immediate contemporaries, with Dr Stockmann's brave defiance of the philistines ringing in their ears, it was, indeed, an enigma and a disappointment. The only explanation they could offer, short of seeing in its author a renegade from the cause of moral progress, was that he was here resting on his oars, relaxing his campaign for a little, beguiling his leisure, so to speak, by satirizing himself. As far as any moral is concerned, *The Wild Duck* seemed to defend ideas which are in direct contradiction to those in the four dramas that preceded it ; in fact, it undid their good work by holding up to ridicule his earlier campaign against false pillars of society, and his condemnation of immoral marriages and hereditary evils. Somehow, Ibsen's reformatory zeal had received a check ; its back seemed broken, its chief nerve paralysed. Had the bitterness which *Ghosts*

stirred up in the world been too overwhelming? Are we to think of the real Ibsen not fighting for a cause with his back to the wall, like Dr Stockmann, but pusillanimously abandoning the struggle? Not like Haakon maintaining against all comers his "kingly thought", but a Jarl Skule, a prey to doubts—doubts of himself, and most fatal of all, doubts of his own doubt? On the other hand, we might ask: what if Ibsen had been justified, when he said he was no moralist intent on converting people, not a reformer, whose sympathies were attached only to the people who strangle lies and base their lives on the uncompromising truth? What if he were really what he protested he was, a poet trying to present a corner of life as he saw it, across his own temperament, and honestly determined to see all the sides that it presented? If this were so, there might be less reason to be surprised at *The Wild Duck*.

For whatever *The Wild Duck* is, it is certainly a very rich slice of life; no other of Ibsen's dramas is so packed with observation and experience, with interesting humanity as this. Here, moreover, he has approximated most closely to the naturalistic canon; perhaps, indeed, it is his one wholly naturalistic drama. None of his works is peopled with such living, unschematically conceived men and women as these—I sometimes think Hjalmar Ekdal is the most perfectly drawn in all the gallery of Ibsen's men and women. In none is the dialogue more natural and convincing. There are pages here—notably in the second act—which seem to me to represent a highwater-mark in modern dramatic prose.

If we will establish a link between *The Wild Duck* and the dramas which preceded it, it may be found in the thought expressed by Dr Stockmann in *An Enemy of the People*, that all truth is relative—a thought which had been elaborated by Strindberg in his great historical drama, *Master Olof*—and that, by the time any particular truth gets down to the understanding

of the majority, it has become something of a lie. When Ibsen came to write *The Wild Duck*, the truths which had been so vigorously championed by his earlier idealists had begun to grow old, to show signs of wear and tear. And if Ibsen was by now convinced of the relativity of all truths, he was also clear concerning their limitations. It was, no doubt, very desirable that society should not be built upon a lie; but to take away the life-lie from the average mortal was, as Dr Relling in this play says, tantamount to depriving him of what, for him, made life worth living. But had not the older dramas proved this, too? Nora and Helmer would certainly have lived on happily in their way, had they been left in possession of their lies, their false ideas of marriage; even Fru Alving might have been happier, had the ghosts of the avenging past been kept out of her life; and certainly the community which Dr Stockmann set by the ears would have been so, had he been less quixotically zealous in proclaiming the truth. Still, we felt in these cases that out of the evil arose a greater good; the world moved forward.—*The Wild Duck* has been called pessimistic; and I daresay it is pessimistic, because no good at all and much evil, including the death of the ingratiating little heroine Hedvig, with her lame duck, arises from the meddlesome interference of Gregers Werle with the sheaf of life-lies on which the humble Ekdal family has, so far, lived tolerably happily. Gregers has been called a caricature of the Ibsenian moral reformer; is he really any more than such a reformer followed out to his logical consequence? The play may be pessimistic; but life often is pessimistic; it is enough for the artist if he awakens in us that pity which purifies. And no one will deny this quality to *The Wild Duck*.

At the same time, the play is difficult to class in Ibsen's work; and indeed, the poet himself was inclined to give it a place by itself.¹ The fact that so

¹ Cp. letter to Frederik Hegel, September 2nd, 1884. *Breve, ed. cit.*, II, p. 137.

many of the ideas of his earlier dramas continue to live on here, even if they live only to die the death of contradiction, links it up with the past ; but in other ways it is more closely related to the work of his last period. That Ibsen is here at his full maturity no one will question ; but he also begins to grow old. When *The Wild Duck* appeared, he was not so very far short of sixty ; and the surest sign of the growing years is in the encroachment of symbolism and allegory. Ibsen's readers had had their first unmistakable taste of it in the persistent rain, followed by the rising sun, in *Ghosts* ; perhaps even earlier ; but this was not yet what we might call old-age symbolism. Whereas in the allusive spiritual meanings of *The Wild Duck*—in its very title—we see the coming of age : its abstract symbolism is difficult to unravel. What does this lame duck stand for, which, wounded by the hunter's shot, dives to the bottom of the pond and bites itself fast to the weeds there, until it is dragged back to life by Hjalmar's dog—to live a pitiful life in the Ekdals' garrett ? It is difficult to say, if it is not the joy of life which slips from the grasp of all the people in the play. Ibsen, too, is subject to that "law of change" of which we shall hear later, which none—not even the greatest of poets—escapes ; the symbol takes the place of the reality ; the thinker gets the upper hand over the poet or maker : "Alles wird Gleichnis". However that may be, Ibsen was never again to give us a picture so full of palpitating life as he did in his *Wild Duck*.

4. THE PERSONAL DRAMAS

IN my last lecture, as you will remember, I reached *Vildanden, The Wild Duck*. To-day I propose to deal with the last phase of Ibsen's activity, his dramas of the inner life.

Rosmersholm, the play which succeeded *The Wild Duck*, appeared at Christmas, 1886. If we look back over critical opinion on Ibsen in the last twenty years or so, we shall find the view frequently expressed that *Rosmersholm* is his most perfect drama. None, it was felt, opens up—or, since *Emperor and Galilean*, had opened up—such wide spiritual horizons, narrow and sombre as is the encasement in which his ideas are confined. Re-reading the drama in these days, it seems to me that in the past we perhaps laid too much weight—it was the way with all older criticism of Ibsen—on the “ideas” of the drama, on its alleged ethical purpose; ascribed too much importance to Rosmer's dream of teaching humanity to ennoble itself, while we overlooked the fact that the tragedy is less concerned with Rosmer's aspirations than with a problem of erotic passion; its chief figure is not Rosmer, but Rebecca West; its central theme not Rosmer's failure to live for and achieve his ideal, but the rising on her dead self of the passionate, pagan Rebecca to the Christian idealism of Rosmer. Here again is a figure in Ibsen's imaginative world who might cry: “Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!”

The Rosmers have lived for generations in the gloomy old mansion of Rosmersholm, and this Rosmer, last of his race, and ordained for the church,

is the heir of a vast and grievous burden of tradition. The tragedy lies in his struggle to shake off that burden, to rise in freedom to a life of noble endeavour and public well-doing. The two opposing political parties are to be seen fighting for his possession. But into his narrow world has come a much more disrupting force than they, Rebecca West. There is something daemonic, valkyrie-like, in this exotic intruder; Ibsen brings her from the far north, from Finmark; he has endowed her with something of the spirit of an old Norse viking, and darkened her early life with deep shadows. She had come to Rosmersholm with the determination to win for herself its master, who stirs in her a kind of primitive passion. To this end she lures Rosmer's wife, the weak and sickly Beate, to her death in the mill-race, first by upbraiding her with the failure of her marriage, and then by hints that her husband has found a more congenial mate in herself. But the dead Beate is as living a protagonist in the drama as if she were still present; she stands between Rebecca and the realization of her passion more effectually than her prototype, the living Dagny, in Ibsen's early drama, *The Warriors at Helgeland*, stands between Hjördis and her Sigurd. The mansion of Rosmersholm is haunted by ghosts, and not merely by those white horses which were once to have given their name to the play, but by more powerful ghosts than any that brought the Alving family to its doom. In the climax of the drama, at the end of its second act, Rosmer asks Rebecca to be his wife. Her only answer can be no; the dead Beate stands between them. To Rosmer Rebecca is moved to make full, unreserved confession; she has met in him her spiritual superior, and she, who would have won him over to her ruthless, Peer Gynt-like egotism, becomes herself a convert to his Christian idealism. That is the real kernel of the drama. In his earlier period, Ibsen had opposed to the doctrine of being sufficient unto oneself that of

"all or nothing", the tragic clash of personality with the world, and the destruction of that personality. But now a more positive conception enters into his life-philosophy; the ultimate goal of self-realization is to be attained neither by Peer Gynt's selfish egoism, nor Brand's futile self-sacrifice, but in self-effacing duty and service. Yet it is given to neither Rebecca nor Rosmer to realize this higher life, to enter into the promised land. Both, however, are vouchsafed a glimpse of it: Rosmer learns that the only way lies through renunciation; and Rebecca that love is no egocentric satisfaction of self. "All the whirling passions", she says, "have settled down into quiet and silence. Rest has descended on my soul—stillness, as on one of our northern bird-cliffs under the midnight sun. It was love that was born in me, the great self-denying love that is content with life as we two have lived it together." In the renunciation, not merely of happiness, but of life itself, lies their only salvation; and together they go down, lured by the "white horses" of Rosmersholm, into the eternal darkness.

Once more in this drama, Ibsen envisages the problem of society and social progress; but he is no longer content merely to brand the "lie of society"; he points the way, constructively and positively, to a new community of noble men and women, who shall uplift the mass. But this plays, as we have seen, a smaller part in the idea of the drama than Rosmer's reckoning with his past. *Rosmersholm* is a drama of the bankruptcy of all the nostrums of the age—scientific, religious, ethical—which are personified here in Brendel, in Mortensgaard and Kroll. All these men have cut adrift from the old safe anchorage; but they have found no new one. Rosmer alone has the great positive faith that saves; but himself he cannot save. Like the Emperor Julian, this radical aristocrat, Johannes Rosmer, is confronted by the eternal antithesis: the paganism of Rebecca or

the ascetic Christian tradition in his blood. He, too, like Julian, gropes his way towards his "third kingdom"; but it is as little permitted to him to enter as it was to the Emperor. Again the Galilean conquers.

In its dramatic construction *Rosmersholm* is, indeed, a masterpiece; I can think of no more perfect example, in the realistic age of European literature, of the outwardly actionless drama of momentous spiritual movement. And yet there is something wanting. It is a shadowy life that the inmates of *Rosmersholm* live; sometimes they themselves seem only shadows. This drama about an overwhelming passion is lacking in that real passion, which can only bring conviction to us in an unrestrained freedom from all subtilizing allegorical meaning. One misses here the old spontaneity of *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts*, *An Enemy of the People*, and *The Wild Duck*, where life—palpitating life—is still at the helm, and still strong enough to keep that insidious schematism, to which Ibsen became prone with the advance of years, successfully at bay.

After *Rosmersholm*, the comedy of *The Lady from the Sea*, which appeared towards the end of 1888, seems a slight affair. It completes the 'trio' of Ibsen's dramas dealing specifically with the problem of true marriage, its predecessors being, of course, *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts*. The conception of *The Lady from the Sea* goes back to the days immediately following the storm awakened by the first of these plays. Ibsen, as we saw, then felt in anything but a conciliatory mood towards the public; and he laid aside the comedy to write *Ghosts*. The new drama does not provide, by any means, a solution to all the difficulties which Ibsen had unveiled in the modern marriage; but it at least suggests one firm foundation on which to build and construct: the choice of a mate in full freedom. This had been denied both to Nora Helmer and Helene Alving. Freedom of choice

is obviously one of the most elementary rights of personality.

The Lady from the Sea, with its sunny background, is one of Ibsen's few entirely pleasant plays. Moreover, the drama is saved from sterilizing theory by the fact that it is largely based on reality; it seems to have been suggested by an experience, similar to Ellida's in the play, of a woman who deeply interested Ibsen, Fru Magdalene Thoresen, the second wife of his wife's father. Ellida is the daughter of a lighthouse-keeper, and has been born by the open sea. She becomes the second wife of Dr Wangel far up the fjord; and she feels like a mermaid that has been washed by the tide into its narrow, shallow waters. Her longing to get back to the open sea is personified in the mysterious stranger with the eyes of the sea, with whom, years before, she had entered into a mystic betrothal. There is an old-world romantic flavour about such a motive, and it came as a pleasant relief after the intensity of *Rosmersholm*.

Dr Wangel's household is no doll's house; Ellida is no doll. She has not become his second wife in ignorance of her responsibilities as a human being; she merely prefers to live her own life of memories. She leaves the management of the house in the capable hands of her step-daughter, Bolette; and Bolette and her young sister, Hilde—that engaging young girl who was to appear again later on, as the impersonation of youth knocking at the door of Ibsen's ageing master-builder—are more important members of the Wangel household than its mistress. The stranger from the sea returns—returns burdened with a mysterious crime—and demands the fulfilment of the old betrothal. The fascination of this symbol of the sea is too strong to be broken by the temperate reasoning of Ellida's husband; but, again, Wangel is no Helmer wrapped in egoism; he never forfeits our sympathy. As long as Ellida is unfree, acting in servitude, she is at the mercy of the mysterious

power. But once her husband gives her freedom, allows her to make her choice in untrammelled liberty, the spell of the stranger is broken; and, Bolette having been provided with a husband, all ends harmoniously, as a comedy should.

Ibsen does not often vouchsafe to give us a play with so pleasing a *peripeteia*; but I fear *The Lady from the Sea* suffers from the lack of inevitableness which renders more comedies than tragedies inconclusive and unreal. Comedy was, indeed, a difficult thing to reconcile with life, for a mind like Ibsen's, which was always burrowing beneath the pleasant surface of things; the marriage-bells, that bring so many a comedy to a happy close, are too often but a sop to frail human hearts that crave for conciliation, and for that joy of life which is doled out so sparingly to most mortals. How many disillusionings are spared us by the arbitrary cutting of the life-thread, when the curtain falls on the comedy writer's last act! I fear something of this kind must come into our minds on witnessing or reading Ibsen's *Lady from the Sea*. One is sceptical whether, after the crisis of the play is over, Ellida and Wangel *will* "live happy ever after". Inevitably the sea will call again—such things are not so easily eradicated from our hearts—the sea-born mermaid will not be able to forget the dream-happiness she has missed; she will continue—can we doubt it?—to stifle, in the tepid waters of the narrow fjord. But *The Lady from the Sea* is a fresh and pleasant comedy, and we must not seem to be ungrateful for it. It has its niche in the sequence of Ibsen's creations, even if it is not one of the greater plays.

It was followed, two years later, by what might be called Ibsen's most European tragedy—the only one perhaps that does not quite necessarily imply a Norwegian background—*Hedda Gabler*. Here Ibsen approximates most closely to the type of drama we associate with the modern French masters of the

theatre. *Hedda Gabler*, too, is a marriage tragedy ; again an example of one of those unhappy unions between unsuited partners, which recur with such persistence all through Ibsen's work. But it differs from the trio of dramas which was completed with *The Lady from the Sea*, in so far as it is not directly a criticism of marriage ; nor is it concerned with its betterment. *Hedda Gabler* is, in fact, not in any sense a drama with a purpose ; it does not inculcate anything. The parallel with the French drama is accentuated by the fact that it is a society play, within the limits prescribed for such plays by the French dramatists, and that it is concerned with a *mésalliance*. The comparison is instructive, if we will understand what Ibsen's art stood for, in the theatre of his time. One is above all struck by the much greater fullness and richness of the web of human fates which Ibsen unrolls for us. Here there are many and complicated issues, and these are concerned, not like the first plays with any ruthless hostility of society towards those that offend against its social code, but essentially with Hedda's conflict with herself. As always with Ibsen, a very great deal of the drama is occupied with what has happened before the curtain rises at all. We know all about this modern young lady, her childhood, her bringing up ; we see her dancing her way through the social maze, until she has exhausted all it has to give her ; we are left in ignorance of none of the motives which induce her, in her *ennui*, to give her hand to an entirely unsuitable and uncongenial suitor, the dry, pedantic scholar, Tesman. Hedda Gabler enters into a marriage which should never have been. And now, the honeymoon over, she is brought face to face with the realities of the life she has deliberately chosen. Hedda is an egoist, again an egoist of the old Peer Gynt type ; she has sought to make the most of life by squeezing as much enjoyment out of it as she can ; she has always, like Peer, gone round, never through, always evaded

unpleasant things. Life has no duties for her, only pleasures. She has, of course, never for a moment been in love with her husband. Indeed, the only love her shallow nature has experienced is that for the down-at-heel genius Lövborg. Too late she discovers that there might have been something in love after all. She cannot face the life to which Tesman brings her home; she resents the "life-lie" in which Tesman's old aunt Julle lives and wants to enmesh her; she views with horror approaching motherhood and its responsibilities. But there is a better side in Hedda, too, a kind of higher craving for the beauty of life which she has missed, a longing for something great and splendid. She hopes that, if Lövborg insists on putting an end to his life, he will at least die in beauty, with vine leaves in his hair—a picture that recalls the old dream of the Emperor Julian. In the end, she, who all her life has pursued the will-o'-the-wisp of pleasure, discovers its insufficiency. The lower side of her nature, which has ever been satisfied with the glittering surface of things, is the stronger; the sense of duty, which might have been her saving, has no meaning for her; her god is the opinion of society, the judgment of her own class; and when this rises against her, she is unable to face the threatening scandal. Out of the mesh of complications in which she has been involved, she sees no escape; like Hedvig Ekdal, she feels herself but a lame duck of life, and, like Hedvig, she shoots herself.

In the summer of 1891 Ibsen revisited Norway, and in the autumn of that year took the sudden and apparently unpremeditated resolve to settle there. At last this prodigal son of Norway returned, and the fatted calf was not wanting, although his relish for it was small. Kristiania remained his home until the end. In these years a notable change came over his art, more notable than any since, after *Peer Gynt* and *Emperor and Galilean*, he had abandoned the drama

of romantic poetry and the historic past for the drama of the present. So far, Ibsen's modern dramas had been concerned with social problems and individual situations lying more or less outside himself; at first, militantly destructive in his campaign against the "lie of society"; then, if not entirely constructive, at least less negative in their issues—the dramas which succeeded *The Wild Duck*. But with the last works of his career, *The Master-builder*, *Little Eyolf*, *John Gabriel Borkman* and *When We Dead Awaken*, he is concerned only with himself. For the first time, the element of personal confession, as the greatest of the German poets conceived it, enters into Ibsen's work, and to the dwarfing of all else. His last dramas are personal documents, as none of his previous works had been; although it may not yet be possible for us to understand all the implications they involve.

The Master-builder, which was published at the end of 1892, is the most autobiographic of all Ibsen's plays. Not that he himself is, in any portrait-sense, to be identified with his master-builder; but the attitude of Solness to life and to his art is, in a peculiar degree, Ibsen's own. This is abundantly clear. It is a very thin and transparent veil of allegory which is thrown over this ageing architect, who sees the triumphs of his life passing into eclipse; whose place is being usurped by a new generation. And equally personal is it that his regretful retrospect should be initiated and intensified by the coming of a young girl into his life. In 1889, Ibsen had met a young Viennese lady, Emilie Bardach, in Gossensass in the Tyrol, his favourite summer haunt; and a strange mystic kind of passion spun itself between them, which brought with it a rejuvenation akin to that effected in Goethe by Minna Herzlieb and Marianne von Willemer. This emotional Indian summer introduced an erotic element into Ibsen's work, which, strange to say, had never before been present. Even in *Rosmersholm*, where passionately erotic flames had

flared up, one has just a little suspicion that they are stage flames of colophonium, lacking in personally experienced warmth. In *The Master-builder*, passion is for the first time envisaged as something more than an inconvenient aberration; and it infuses more life-blood into the play than is to be found in any other of these years. But the last four dramas are all concerned in some way with problems of this kind; and they are all plays of disillusionment and dissatisfaction; allegories of the ageing poet, haunted by the ghosts of things inexperienced and unachieved, by doubts whether he had lived his life wisely and well.

The best of the Master-builder's life is behind him. He had in the aspiring days of his youth built churches; then had turned to the humbler task of building human homes; but inward satisfaction with his work had always escaped him. Had he been able to reconcile the two ideals, build homes with the spires of churches, as it is expressed in the allegory, he might have entered into his "third kingdom". But its doors are closed to him; as they had been closed to Julian and Rosmer, and indeed to all Ibsen's aspirants to the higher life. The house in which Solness and his wife Aline had lived in sheltered happiness—that is to say, the old world of circumscribed ideas and ideals—is burned down; and in its ashes they seek their lost treasure of happiness and self-confidence, confidence in each other. But this is gone for ever. Solness has lost the ideals of his youth; it is his tragedy that he, master-builder though he is, cannot erect for himself a new life-ideal; he cannot remain young with the young.

Into this life of grave and growing discontent comes youth—comes Hilde Wangel, who *does* believe in her master-builder. I think it was hardly a happy idea on Ibsen's part to identify this Hilde with the Hilde we have already met in *The Lady from the Sea*. It is impossible for us to reconcile the new Hilde

with the former child who found life so full of thrills. We hear now of a kiss, which Solness had given her as a child, and a promise that he would one day make her his princess. The memory of these things has accompanied her through all her adolescent years. But the Hilde Solness kissed must, of course, have been younger than the Hilde of *The Lady from the Sea*; and assuredly that Hilde had known neither kiss nor promise. The Hilde of *The Master-builder* waits with the eager longing of Nora for the miracle, the coming of the kingdom. She bursts into Solness's life as youth incarnate; it is the new generation knocking at the door. She lures him on to win back the triumphs of his earlier years; but it is too late. The lost ideals cannot be retrieved; life cannot be lived over again; the missed "joy of life" can only be atoned for by sacrifice. Solness grows giddy in affixing the garland to his last building; and at Hilde's shout of "Hurra!" falls to his death. She at least sees, as it had not been granted to Hedda Gabler to see, the man she loves die in beauty.

Little Eyolf, which was written in Kristiania and published in December 1894, is again a drama on the theme of the unhappy union of ill-assorted partners. It is closely linked up with *Rosmersholm*; just as in that tragedy, the disturbing factor is here again a fatal, egocentric passion. Rita Allmers is another Rebecca. Rebecca's courage to do penance for her passion, by sacrifice, gives Rosmer back his faith in his ideals; while Rita's abnegation restores her husband's faith in the efficacy of life and work. But whereas in the earlier drama death is the only way out, the only possible atonement, here that atonement is attained in self-sacrificing activity. Sacrifice, not self-realization, is now Ibsen's solution to the life-riddle; the old "Be thyself!" has become "Sacrifice thyself!" Not the tragic repudiation of life is now the watch-word, but atonement in active, self-denying work for

others. The end is not death, but resignation, and a courageous facing of the inevitable.

Little Eyolf is a very sombre drama—a drama without a smile—and seems lacking in the elements that make for a popular success. There is little action or stage appeal, and that little is largely confined to the first act; the rest of the drama being occupied with explaining how what happens in that act came about. Two out of the six personages of the drama appear only in Act I; and little Eyolf, the crippled child of Allmers and Rita, is drowned before the play has got much further under way. Moreover, these few characters, such as they are, are very shadowy. In the hands of capable actors they may be filled out with a temporary life; but on the printed page they seem but bloodless shadows, “sicklied o’er with the pale cast” of allegory. The child who gives his name to the drama is hardly a living child. He is but a symbol of his parents’ crime; his floating crutch, when he himself lies at the bottom of the sea, a reminder of their guilt, the nemesis of egoistic passion. A kind of tiredness seems to have crept over the old poet and lamed his hand. The mists of allegory envelop the slender theme of the work, and sap its poetic vitality; the symbol has usurped the place of the substance of life. A fundamental and mystic thought in *Little Eyolf* is the inexorable law of change in human hearts and lives: the present is continuously becoming the past; the present cannot always be the present; and, for better or worse, life is a thing of eternally changing horizons. Life is change, life is relativity. And when the inevitable penalty has been exacted; when the healthy-minded optimist Ulfheim departs, and the gentle Asta has transferred to him her mute affection for her half-brother, Allmers; when the eyes of the dead child glare for the last time out of the darkness in the lights of the receding steamer, husband and wife are left alone to build up their broken lives, by

bringing light and happiness—the thought is Rita's, not Allmers'—to the coming generation. The spirit of little Eyolf shall be with them in the heavy work that lies before them. "Whither", asks Rita, "shall we look, Alfred?" "Upwards." "Yes, yes, upwards." "Upwards to the heights; to the stars; and to the great stillness." Such an activity may bring no resplendent happiness—it is difficult to believe, as we have seen, that it could have brought much to Ellida Wangel; but it does not, at least, like Rosmer's dream of a nobler humanity, bring death. The sin of excess of passion in Rita, of defect of it in Allmers, is atoned for; the half-mast flag before the house is hauled up. And there are not many of Ibsen's dramas which end with the flag flying from the mast-head.

Little Eyolf had been a summer drama, even if, long before its close, its summer had merged into autumn. Its successor, *John Gabriel Borkman*, published in December 1894, is a winter's tale. A winter tragedy—a tragedy of the avenging past, of a powerless struggle to live the past down. Here, no law of change brings a gleam of hope; no possibility is afforded to these fate-bound mortals to atone. In *Little Eyolf* the dead past had been allowed to bury its dead; here the past refuses to die. Not a shimmer of light or the joy of life penetrates into this melancholy picture of broken lives; no warmth tempers the bitter cold of its eternal snow, its frozen hearts. *John Gabriel Borkman* is an infinitely stormy tragedy; and in its bloodless, symbolic way, it is unquestionably one of Ibsen's greatest.

The theme harks back to the very first of Ibsen's modern dramas. Borkman, the great banker, who has committed default and spent years in prison, is a "pillar of society"; a Bernick grown to gigantic, imposing stature; and, at the close, no trivial theatrical conversion dims his tragic greatness. A man of dominating will, he has the courage of his crime,

as Consul Bernick never had and never could have had. In his ruthless self-seeking, Borkman has been an enemy of society in the grand style; and as an enemy of society he passes out of life. And there are further links with the old play: Gunhild and Ella, wife and sister-in-law, stand to each other as Betty and Lona did; Erhard Borkman, his son, is what Olaf Bernick might have become, had his father not reformed and the pleasant change not come over the Consul's household.

John Gabriel Borkman had loved Ella Rentheim, but, in furtherance of his ends and ambitions, had married her half-sister, Gunhild. He had thereby, as Ella says to her sister, "committed a double murder"; he had "murdered your soul and mine". All his life he had sought wealth and might, ever since the gold had gleamed on him, as a miner's son, in the bowels of the earth; but he had not realized that there is greater might in the self-sacrificing love for a fellow-being than in the untold wealth he has won and lost. He has committed a worse crime than that which he expiated within the prison walls; he has killed the love-life in a human heart. For such a crime there is no atonement—no redemption. More than this, Borkman is gnawed, like Skule, like Allmers, by the great doubt that paralyses the life of all Ibsen's personalities, the doubt of himself, the doubt of his capability to achieve; and now of his power to rehabilitate himself. He is a Napoleon who has been crippled in his first battle; in his heart of hearts, he even doubts his own life-lie.

Such is this winter's tale, this tragedy of frozen hearts. Like another, more self-conscious Peer Gynt, Borkman has striven, in egoistic arrogance, to be himself; and, like Peer Gynt, he loses his own soul. In his craving to accumulate worldly treasure, he has missed the more precious spiritual treasure that lay nearer to his hand. He has allowed his heart to become petrified and cold; and it is the cold that

kills. Of the self-sacrificing love which, in *Little Eyolf*, had held out the promise of redemption, Borkman has none; his life goes down in unrelieved tragedy, and over his dead body the two women join hands—two shadows, whom his coldness has destroyed. *John Gabriel Borkman*, like *Brand*, is a tragedy of lovelessness. And to kill the love-life in a human soul is the greatest of all crimes; the sin against the Holy Ghost, for which there can be no forgiveness.

In 1898, Ibsen's seventieth birthday was celebrated. The lonely and moody poet, who had never been good friends with the world, would have liked to avoid all the fuss attendant upon such an occasion. This was not possible; so he put the best face he could upon it, accepted mutely the congratulations that were showered upon him from all sides. In his heart of hearts, he was in no mood for such things; he regarded them all with a grim resignation, mingled with irony. Once more he girded himself to his work; and in 1899 appeared his last drama, his epilogue, *When We Dead Awaken*.

The tragedy of almost all Ibsen's heroes is their failure to achieve their calling: the life-task which they believe a Higher Power has laid upon their shoulders. But while, in *Emperor and Galilean*, he still believed that apparent failure to achieve this end might signify the realization of it in the eyes of an all-wise Providence, even that consolation would now seem to have deserted the eternal doubter. Of the dramas of the past, the one with which *When We Dead Awaken* is most likely to suggest a comparison is *The Master-builder*; there we have an architect, an artist, who has, in a certain sense, succeeded in his calling, but whose success is crowned by a tragic catastrophe. The sculptor Arnold Rubek also wins fame, but he pays the penalty in disillusionment and spiritual discord; he, too, goes down in tragedy. Both dramas are tragedies of the ultimate failure of

the artist ; but that of the last drama is the more terrible, for the failure is conditioned, not by the natural course of life, but by inward disillusionment. Thus *When We Dead Awaken* is a very sombre drama, as hopeless in its outlook as even the wintry play of *John Gabriel Borkman*.

When We Dead Awaken is very far from being a great, or even a good drama ; rather it is the weakest— weakest in form, weakest in characters—of all Ibsen's mature work ; it is even marred by several inexplicable inconsistencies. Advancing years were exacting their tribute ; Ibsen's hand was losing its cunning. Moreover, abstract allegory has here triumphed completely over life-giving poetry. It is not easy to extricate the idea which the poet has embodied in his epilogue, or even to understand the intimately personal implications it undoubtedly contains. There comes in every man's life, Ibsen would seem to say, a moment when his whole life-happiness, the triumphant fulfilment of his calling, is within his grasp ; but few mortals know how to grasp it, or have the courage to grasp it. In previous dramas he had shown us men wilfully throwing away the opportunity, and chasing after the will-o'-the-wisp of power, of wealth, of fame. If they failed, it could be said of them that they were faithless to their true calling, and their fate was deserved. But now the disconcerting thought appears that even the calling may be a will-o'-the-wisp. Rubek has sacrificed the joy of life for his vocation, only in the end to doubt whether it had any reality at all.

Irene, symbol of the life-joy without which life is only a living death, had stood model to Rubek when he created his great piece of sculpture, "The Resurrection Day". Confident in his art, he had sacrificed Irene, renounced the happiness she might have brought into his life. He had forgotten her, forgotten that he had once promised to take her up on a high mountain and show her all the glories

of the world, just as Solness had promised the child Hilde that she should one day be his princess. Rubek obeys the behests of his calling, but, like Brand, like Borkman, he too has committed the great sin for which there is no forgiveness: he has killed the love-life in the woman he loves. Irene goes down into the kingdom of the dead, descends for a time into the death-in-life of insanity; and Rubek, too, becomes but a dead soul; for when Irene passes out of his life, it is as when Iduna withdrew her golden apples from Valhalla. That is the past; and now we are given a glimpse beyond, into the present: these dead shadows awaken; Irene is restored to conscious life; Rubek comes back from his inactive world of shadows. But it is too late; the past cannot be relived; cannot be shaken off. The dead only return to life to die a second time. "I am a shadow's shadow", says Furia to Catilina, in Ibsen's very first drama; "now we can go down together to Charon's boat—two ghosts." These very words might have been said by Irene to Rubek, in the last of the dramas.¹ So the ring is closed.

Thus Ibsen, the eternal self-doubter, ends by doubting the last dogma of his faith that was left to him: the "calling" is mayhap an illusion like all else, while the only thing that matters in this earthly life is the love that links soul to soul, that links man to his fellowmen. Through his last drama stalks gaunt and terrible, as in no other of his works, the grim ghost of Jarl Skule, "God's stepson on earth". And indeed ghosts—ghosts of Ibsen's old ideals—flit unceasingly through his avenging epilogue. Remember with what jubilant faith Ibsen had, in early days, preached his doctrine of an all-saving individualism, the rights of personality, how he had denounced the crime, which Hebbel first crystallized into great poetry, of debasing a human soul to a "thing". With the slamming of the door of the doll's house ringing in

¹ Cp. S. Höst, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

our ears—Nora's declaration of her right and duty to be no "thing", but a human being—what do we now find? This uncompromising individualist, this fighter of lies, has come to see that there is a greater duty than either; and that is, self-sacrifice, self-immolation in the cause of human well-being, for the man as for the woman; he has discovered that there is a "something in us not ourselves making for righteousness"—the abnegation of ourselves. Also that this something means more to "him who formed the pitcher", than all the evanescent lies, all the egocentric individualism that tramples people and things heroically underfoot. Ibsen's ideal of womanhood has long ceased to seek self-realization in freedom; the old Romantic dream returns; the woman redeems through self-sacrificing love, as Solvejg did of old. Ibsen's last word on woman's work in the world, as on man's, is a recantation of the militant individualism with which he set out: now, the highest life-wisdom is renunciation, self-sacrifice, the obliteration of individuality in the patient service of the great entity, humanity. He had begun by bravely seeking to bring forth a fair new world, in the spirit of truth, with the destruction of the lies that ensnare our lives; only to find, with the years, that truth itself is but a fleeting, relative thing. He had sought to build up a new society on personality and freedom. But all that is gone; and all that is left is resignation. And yet not quite all, for one great positive thought emerges from these later plays, a thought that had never been far absent from him since *Rosmersholm*, the thought to which our own Carlyle clung grimly to the end: "Work!—Work and despair not!" Ibsen's "Epilogue" is, then, a final recantation of the social and ethical criticism of the long series of his modern dramas; a recantation written by a poet to whom it was not given to attain harmony with himself, to solve the great life-riddle, to enter the promised land of his "third kingdom". There

is the peace neither of *The Tempest*, nor of the Second Part of *Faust*, in *When We Dead Awaken*.

It was to be his last gift to the world. In March 1900, he had a stroke, which was followed by a more severe one in the January of the following year. His life slowly ebbed, and he died on May 23rd, 1906.

Henrik Ibsen was not a happy mortal, in spite of a success and a world fame such as have come to few men in modern times. On all his work lies the stamp of an eternal dualism, an unceasing spiritual conflict. Truth and the lie; the deed and the dream; the spirit and the flesh; Hellenism and Christianity; the joy of life and the abnegation of life. Faced with these oppressing, insoluble enigmas, which thwarted him at every step like the great "Böjg" of *Peer Gynt*, he was never able to fight through—as did Goethe—to serenity and peace. Nor could he be simply happy; the great joy of life, for which he so passionately craved, always escaped him. And it was just this passionate craving which formed the innermost kernel of his work—"the sun, the sun, give me the sun!"—and the deep personal tragedy of his life. He had believed—passionately believed—in his calling; and, like Brand, he had sacrificed everything to it. He had shut himself off from the world, closed his door on friends and outside sympathies and affections, to pursue that calling in lonely singleness of heart. He had refused to tread the primrose path of simple happiness; had taken the austere way of the fulfilment of a duty which he felt laid upon his genius. But then came, in these later years, the moment when the terrible question presented itself to him, in all its gaunt nakedness: *cui bono*? Should I not have been wiser to write pleasant dramas for the million, instead of enigmatic tragedies dwelling on the sores and failures of modern civilization? Why not have built comfortable dwelling-houses, instead of austere churches; have contributed to the greater happiness of mankind,

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NOTWITHSTANDING the fact that during the last quarter of a century we have devoted considerable attention to the literatures of the North, Sören Kierkegaard is but little known to the English-speaking world. The Norwegians, Ibsen and Björnson, have exerted a very real power on our intellectual life, and for Björnson we for a time cherished even a kind of affection. But Kierkegaard, the writer who holds the indispensable key to the intellectual life of Scandinavia, to whom Denmark in particular looks up as her most original man of genius in the nineteenth century, we have wholly overlooked. There is little excuse for ignoring him on the part of those who are versed in the northern tongues; for at present he looms very large on the literary and philosophical horizon in Scandinavia; and there are several excellent books on his life and work, both in Danish and Swedish.¹ Within recent years, moreover, the Danes have produced a monumental edition of Kierkegaard's complete works,² which is at present being followed up by the publication of manuscript materials supplemental to the

¹ The two best Danish books on Kierkegaard, Georg Brandes' *Sören Kierkegaard: en kritisk Fremstilling i Grundrids*, Copenhagen, 1877 (also *Samlede Skrifter*, II, 1899, pp. 249 ff.), and H. Höfding's *Sören Kierkegaard som Philosoph*, Copenhagen, 1892, are both to be obtained in German translation, Leipzig, 1879, and Stuttgart, 1896, respectively. Cp. further C. Koch, *Sören Kierkegaard*, Copenhagen, 1898, 2nd ed., 1916; P. A. Rosenberg, *Sören Kierkegaard: hans liv, hans personlighed og hans forfatterskab*, Copenhagen, 1898, and C. Jensen, *S. Kierkegaards religiøse Udvikling*, Aarhus, 1898; in Swedish, W. Rudin, *Sören Kierkegaards person och författarskap*, I, Stockholm, 1880; T. Bohlin, *Sören Kierkegaard*, Stockholm, 1918.

² *Sören Kierkegaards Samlede Værker*. Udgivne af A. B. Drachmann, J. L. Heiberg og H. O. Lange. 14 vols. Copenhagen, 1901-6.

instead of worrying over the lies on which it rested? Why not have brought sweetness and light, joy and the sun, into human lives? Why not have painted idyllic pictures of life's pleasures, instead of carving miniatury "Resurrections"? For whose good was all this aspiration towards "the eternal stars and the great stillness", this wilful resignation of the joy of life? This, if I am not mistaken, is the thought which most constantly persisted throughout these sombre latter years.

We like to think of Henrik Ibsen as a great modern realist; but are we right? Would it not be nearer the truth to describe him as a prodigal son of the old Romanticism,¹ who, in this last sad period, found his faltering way back to the old Romantic home?

That by virtue of his realism he won new kingdoms for his art is not to be questioned. He destroyed the artificiality of the drama as he found it, he made the "machine-made play" impossible; he gave the theatre new, and many-facetted human figures; he welded, as no master before him, the past of a dramatic action with the present. All that is true. But none the less he was a Julian the Apostate, who fought against his time, felt himself vanquished by his time, and yet, in spite of defeat, fulfilled his calling in the great world process. In 1863, when Ibsen's first tragedy, *The Pretenders*, was produced, Friedrich Hebbel, the greatest of his immediate predecessors, closed his eyes in Vienna. Ibsen's place, so far as I can now define it, is that of Hebbel's successor in the higher dramatic poetry of Europe.

¹ Cp. H. Kehler, *Studier i det Ibsenske drama, Edda*, IV (1915), pp. 169 ff., and V (1916), pp. 40 ff., 258 ff.

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Efterladte Papirer, edited by H. P. Barfod and H. Gottsched in eight volumes between 1869 and 1881.¹ But to become acquainted with Kierkegaard one no longer needs to read Danish; his works are now virtually all to be had in German and in an edition which is a delight to the eye²; and the literature on Kierkegaard both in German and French is growing rapidly. But all this literature, with the exception of Brandes' brilliant monograph, deals mainly with Kierkegaard as a philosopher and a theologian; here I propose to restrict myself to him as a man of letters.

Sören Aabye Kierkegaard was born in Copenhagen on May 5th, 1813. He came of Jutish peasant stock. His father, Michael Pedersen Kierkegaard, as a boy had herded sheep on the Jutland moors; and these solitudes left an indelible stamp of melancholy on him, which he transmitted to his son. At the age of twelve, however, Michael Kierkegaard made his way to Copenhagen, and by shrewd commonsense and business ability worked his way up to affluence. He became a hosier, and gradually extended his shop into a kind of general warehouse; before Sören was born he was able to retire from business altogether. Of Kierkegaard's mother there is less, and indeed, nothing to say. She was his father's second wife, and had previously been his servant. She lived until Sören was twenty-one, but seems to have meant nothing for his development; at least, he never mentions her.

Sören Kierkegaard was the seventh and youngest child of his parents, who, at his birth, were fifty-seven and forty-five; he was born old and never knew what it was to be young. Unfortunately the conditions

¹ *Sören Kierkegaards Papirer*. Udgivne af P. A. Heiberg og V. Kuhr. Vols. I-X, Copenhagen, 1909-20.

² *Sören Kierkegaards Gesammelte Werke*. Unverkürzt herausgegeben von H. Gottsched und Christoph Schrempf. 12 vols. Jena, 1909 ff. There is also an introductory volume to this edition by O. P. Monrad, *Sören Kierkegaard, sein Leben und seine Werke*, Jena, 1909.

under which he was brought up did nothing to counteract the disadvantages of his birth. Michael Kierkegaard was something of a tyrant, and ruled his household with a rod of iron. In spite of increasing wealth he permitted no relaxation of the austere simplicity of earlier days ; and he himself continued to dress in an old-fashioned style which brought down on him the ridicule of the outside world. There was, no doubt, a strong blend of eccentricity in this respectable tradesman, and his children suffered under it. Worst of all for the growing boy was the depressing religious atmosphere of the household, for the father's gloomy Lutheranism led to a complete abnegation of the brighter side of life. And yet, beneath his repellent exterior, there lay a rich fund of poetic imagination. This imagination, cut off from every natural outlet, turned, as it were, upon itself, and created an unhealthy, hot-house atmosphere, which could not but be injurious to a child like Sören, who had inherited so much of his father's unbalanced temperament. Sören tells us, for instance, how, instead of taking him for a real excursion into the country, his father would invite him to an imaginary walk. He would then pace up and down the room, the boy at his side, describing in minute detail the people they might have seen, the sights and sounds they would have met by the way ; until in the end, the imaginary excursion was more entertaining than any real one could have been !

Sören's extraordinarily vivid imagination was thus a heritage from his father ; so, too, was his propensity for dialectic fencing. That love of argument for argument's sake, which is responsible for much in his published writings, was strongly marked in the elder Kierkegaard and made him an extremely difficult man to get on with. Sören had also in common with his father a tendency to brood morbidly over religious questions ; a tendency which threw a shadow over his boyhood and became a sinister power in his

life as he grew older. In his book *Stadier paa Livets Vej* (*Stages on Life's Way*) he says: "A son is, as it were, a mirror in which a father sees himself reflected; and a father is for a son a kind of mirror in which he sees what he himself will some day be. But the father and son of whom we speak seldom regarded each other in this way; for their daily life only displayed the cheerfulness of a lively intercourse. It would, however, happen at times that the father, with a troubled look in his face, would stand in front of his son and say: 'Poor child, thou livest in silent despair!'"

Bad as Kierkegaard's home was, for a boy of his character and disposition, as a preparation for the world, school was no better. He was sickly and could not play games like his comrades; and they jeered mercilessly at the coarse peasant's clothes in which he was sent to school. Mentally he was as unable to cope with his surroundings as he was physically; and his school experiences were in this respect but a foreshadowing of what was to befall him in later life. He was one of those shy, shrinking children who make enemies unwittingly; he found himself at war with his surroundings without desiring it. And in self-defence he had often to have recourse to deceit and lying; if he retaliated openly, his sharp irony, which was his only weapon, made things worse than before. Even a conscious self-deception was part of the armour with which he protected his own weakness and embarrassment. Here lay, perhaps, the origin of that extraordinary hide-and-seek which he plays with his own personality all through his writings. Worst of all, the harsh discipline of home and school engendered in Kierkegaard a cringing, cowardly attitude towards his fellows, a flunkeyism which warped his whole life. But it also fostered a kind of inner life of a very different kind. Although to the world he appeared as the most crushed of crushed worms, Kierkegaard was in his own heart and

imagination the freest and most daringly original of mortals; beneath his humble bearing slumbered an almost overweening confidence in his own powers and genius. "Far back in my memory", he says, "existed the thought that in every generation there are two or three who are sacrificed for others, who are employed to discover amidst terrible suffering truths whereby others benefit; and, heavy of heart, I found the understanding of myself in the fact that I had been chosen for this purpose."¹ Perhaps Kierkegaard was right in his proud conviction; but, whether or no, the terrible brand of anomaly and exception lay on him from the beginning; and an uncomfortable, unhappy exception of genius he remained to the last.

In spite of his parsimony, Kierkegaard's father was anxious to give his youngest son the best education he could; accordingly, at the age of seventeen Sören became a student at the University of Copenhagen. It was unfortunate, considering the fateful shadow which the harsh pietism of his home had thrown on his life, that Sören should have turned to philosophy and theology at the University; but it could hardly have been otherwise. These studies had, at least, the advantage that they plunged him at once into the all-absorbing interest of his subsequent life, his conflict with Hegel. In the thirties of last century theology in Denmark—as in Germany itself—was dominated by Hegelian speculation; and Kierkegaard's originality as a thinker first showed itself in his antagonism to the Hegelian standpoint, in the religious controversies of the time.

Meanwhile a terrible catastrophe took place in Kierkegaard's life when he reached his twenty-fifth year. What the catastrophe consisted of he never tells us. "Then it was", he says, "that the great earthquake took place, the terrible revolution, which suddenly compelled me to seek a new, unimpeachable interpretation of all phenomena. I had a presentiment

¹ *Samlede Værker*, ed. cit., XIII, p. 566.

that my father's great age was not a divine blessing, but rather a curse. . . . A guilt must rest on the whole family, a divine punishment be impending."¹ The terrible revolution seems to have consisted only of the following discovery. As a boy of twelve, his father, half-famished and parched on his lonely moors, had solemnly ascended a hill and cursed God. This happened in 1768, and the awful sin he had committed still lay with crushing weight on Michael Kierkegaard, when he was an old man of eighty-two. Incredible as this may seem, it was still more incredible that this old story should have made so deep an impression on young Kierkegaard, fancy-ridden and prone to melancholy and despair as he was. One cannot help thinking that he regarded it rather as a symbol of the causes which lay behind other evils, physical as well as mental, which he had inherited: it was a kind of religious embodiment of the curse of heredity under which he suffered. The catastrophe that broke over him was, in reality, the conviction that he was the victim of a curse, from the consequences of which it was vain to flee. Shortly after he had made this fateful discovery his father died, and he was free to face life on his own responsibility; or rather, he was less free than ever, for his father exerted a greater power over him in death than in life. A relentless, fatalistic melancholy settled down on him and stifled all healthy spiritual growth.

Left to himself, Kierkegaard seems to have drifted naturally into the career of a writer. It was not to his advantage that he had means enough to make a "bread-and-butter" occupation unnecessary; for it brought with it a certain lack of concentration, an inability to apply himself steadily to such work as he undertook. He himself says that he took to writing books in order to make good the sins of his youth. Possibly amongst these sins he counted doubts of the validity of Christianity, which had begun to assail

¹ *Af Søren Kierkegaards Efterladte Papirer*, 1833-43, Copenhagen, 1869, p. 4.

him, and which, like his father's "sin against the Holy Ghost", had assumed exaggerated proportions; but there is little doubt that "the thorn in the flesh" ("Pælen i Kjødets") which caused his martyrdom, and of which we hear so much from his diaries, had a physical as well as a spiritual origin. However that may be, a writer of books he became, and so industrious was he that in the fifteen years of his literary life, he turned out something like thirty volumes, besides leaving behind him an enormous mass of manuscript material.

In 1838 he published *Af en endnu Levendes Papirer* (*From the Papers of One Still Living*), which in the fantastic humour of its title reminds one of Jean Paul. It is nominally a criticism of Hans Christian Andersen's novel, *Køn en Spillemand* (*Only a Fiddler*, 1837), and is, at the best, rather indifferent criticism, strongly coloured by Hegelian subtleties of thought and phraseology. But it touches on one question which had a subjective interest for Kierkegaard, namely, whether it is better, as Andersen held, for the man of genius to be nurtured and pampered, or, as Kierkegaard preferred to think, to be schooled by adversity—a fate which he felt had been his own. Much more important was his thesis for the degree of master, *Om Begrebet Ironi* (*On the Idea of Irony*), which he published in 1841. It is worth while looking into this treatise, for it adumbrates the chief idea of Kierkegaard's master-work, *Enten—Eller* (*Either—Or*), and helps to elucidate his relations to the German Romantic movement. Just as his first essay turned round a book of Andersen's, so the present treatise resolves itself, in its ultimate elements, into a discussion of a work which had already engrossed the attention of Germany's great Romantic theologian, Schleiermacher—Friedrich Schlegel's notorious novel, *Lucinde*. In face of Schlegel's demand for an unfettered freedom in the relation of the sexes—a demand into which the aestheticism of the Romantics had degenerated—

Kierkegaard set up what he called a "religious-ethical" ideal; and in contrasting the two life-ideals, he foreshadows the problem he was to treat later in *Enten—Eller and Stadier paa Livets Vej*. He ironically combats Romantic aestheticism by stigmatizing it, not as immoral, but as unbeautiful; and he commends the religious ideal, not as morally superior to the aesthetic one, but as something essentially poetic.

On September 10th, 1840, Kierkegaard became formally engaged to Regine Olsen, a young girl of a good Copenhagen family. As she was still very young, the marriage was not to take place for a year; and in that year Kierkegaard lived through an extraordinary mental tragedy, which ended in the breaking off of the engagement. The whole affair has much resemblance to the love-stories of some of the German Romanticists; one thinks of Novalis's infatuation for Sophie Jung, also a passion which gives the impression of having been more imagined than real. It was almost a matter of course that in a man of such overweening imaginative powers as Kierkegaard, the shadow should be infinitely more to him than the substance. The real Regine proved a continual disappointment to her lover; he felt happier communing with her in imagination than when she was at his side; and he seems, at a comparatively early stage, to have been convinced that the engagement must be broken off at all costs. And he set about it in the most ingenious and calculating way. He insidiously endeavoured to make Regine believe that he no longer cared for her, and thus to turn her against him. When this did not succeed, he was ultimately compelled himself to take the decisive step. The consequence was something not far from a public scandal in Copenhagen society; and from gossiping tongues Kierkegaard fled—fled to Berlin, where he threw himself into philosophical studies. Too much should not be made of the inconsiderate cruelty of his faithlessness. Regine, no doubt, suffered a little in her *amour propre*;

but it is hardly conceivable that she was very much in love—she confessed as much in later years¹—with the eccentric philosopher. When Kierkegaard had become famous, she was hardly likely to forget her relations with him ; but the fact remains that not long after the breaking-off of the engagement, she married another, in whom she had been interested before Kierkegaard came into her life at all.

To Kierkegaard, however, the emotional crises of these years were catastrophic. There is hardly a parallel case in the annals of literary lives when so much sprang from so slight a cause. His betrothal was more or less immediately the theme of all the books he wrote in the early forties. In these he analysed his feelings and the motives that lay behind them to the last shred ; he experimented with them, magnified them, and developed them in one direction or the other, until the original basis of fact was left far behind ; and every fresh experiment or hypothesis meant, if not a new book, at least the pinning down in words of some new discovery of subtle psychological or emotional experience.

The two chief works of this first period of Kierkegaard's career, *Enten—Eller* and *Stadier paa Livets Vej*, are thus the immediate products of his unhappy experience as the lover and betrothed of Regine Olsen ; and they are the works on which Kierkegaard's fame as a man of letters most securely rests. The former of these, which appeared in 1843, without the author's name, as *Enten—Eller, et Livs-Fragment udgivet af Victor Eremita* (*Either—Or, A Fragment of a Life, edited by Victor Eremita*) with a motto from Young : "Are passions then the pagans of the soul? Is reason alone baptized?", is frequently described as the greatest work of modern Danish literature, a claim which is justified by the enormous and far-reaching influence it has exercised : it penetrated in a superficial

¹ Cp. *Kierkegaardske Papirer, Forlovelsen* ; udgivne for Fru Regine Schlegel af R. Meyer, Copenhagen, 1904.

age to the fundamental realities of things, and stirred up men's minds in Denmark as nothing had done before.

Like so many of Kierkegaard's books, *Enten—Eller* is introduced by an elaborate and enticing preface. With a graphic, narrative power unsurpassed among even the purely imaginative writers of Denmark, the editor tells how he came into possession of the papers he here publishes. He describes, with convincing circumstantiality, how he had been tempted to purchase an old secretaire in a dealer's shop, and how an accident had disclosed a hidden drawer containing the manuscripts here laid before the reader. This kind of motive was, of course, familiar in Romantic fiction, and Kierkegaard employs it again even more effectually, if more fantastically, in the introduction to the third section of *Stadier paa Livets Vej*. The papers, the editor informs us, fall into two clearly marked groups which imply two different authors; these he designates A and B. Under this fiction Kierkegaard offers the reader two opposed philosophies of life, the "aesthetic" set forth by A, and the "ethic" set forth by B. A is guided exclusively by "aesthetic" considerations, that is to say, considerations of feeling; he is a man whose end in life is enjoyment. B, on the other hand, is the representative of the moral life. Kierkegaard places these two antagonistic philosophies side by side, and leaves his readers to choose between them: "Either—Or." The arranging of A's papers gives him most trouble. First, he collects together scraps of paper with aphorisms written on them, and these he publishes under the title *Διαψάλματα*—the term applied in the Greek translation of the Bible to the music which divides the Psalms. Then comes a long, and to modern readers, wearisome discussion of Mozart's *Don Juan*, followed by disquisitions on types of betrayed heroines—Marie in Goethe's *Clavigo*, Gretchen in *Faust*, and Elvira in Mozart's *Don Juan*—

and a criticism of a long-forgotten comedy of Scribe's. The last of A's contributions is by far the most important. This is *Forførerens Dagbog* (*The Seducer's Diary*), a masterpiece alike of psychological analysis and of Danish prose. Nothing so penetrating and original had appeared before in the language, and nothing comparable with it was to appear again until Jacobsen's *Niels Lyhne* forty years later. In the earlier papers attributed to A, Mozart's famous hero had been taken as an illustration of life built up on immediate enjoyment. Johannes, in *Forførerens Dagbog*, is a quite different type of aesthete; he is the "reflective" enjoyer—not enjoying life immediately at all, but delighting in his own retrospective reflection on enjoyment. Johannes, in other words, is the impersonation of the strange, anomalous, emotional life which Kierkegaard himself had been compelled by his peculiar temperament to live. Johannes is a lover whose imagination is stronger than his perceptions, who is at the mercy of his mental activity, a passive channel for ideas rather than a living being. He embodies the reflective sentimentalism which had run riot in the Romantic literature of Germany; and his aestheticism contrasts with Mozart's, as the "sentimental" poetry of Schiller's classification contrasts with the "naïve" poetry of the Greeks.

The second part of *Enten—Eller* is an exposition of the ethic attitude of mind. It consists of two lengthy letters from B to A, the author of the first part, and criticizes the life-philosophy enunciated there. B sets up a philosophy of duties and moral ideals, which is directly antagonistic to the views which A holds. His first letter deals with the aesthetic justification of marriage, which he claims to be a higher aesthetic phenomenon than the Romantic love of the pure aesthete, the latter being devoid of all sense of self-denying duty. The second letter, the more important of the two, approaches the theme

constructively, and discusses the balance between the aesthetic and the ethic view in the moulding of personality. One must be careful in all this not to confuse Kierkegaard's own convictions with those of his two fictitious antagonists; he is neither A nor B, or rather he is both; and what he here describes is virtually his own passage from what Carlyle called the "Everlasting No" to the "Everlasting Yea". But what that "Everlasting Yea" meant for Kierkegaard is only dimly suggested by the comments of the editor, "Victor Eremita", at the close of *Enten—Eller*. To discover Kierkegaard's personal attitude to the two philosophies here enunciated, and to find a definite statement of his own philosophy of life, we have to turn to another work. In *Stadier paa Livets Vej*, which appeared in 1845, he recognizes three great stages. The purely natural condition of man is that in which he is at the mercy of his instincts; this is the "aesthetic" stage, which can only end in pessimism and despair. But it is possible for the aesthete to rise higher, to a second or ethical stage, to substitute for the motto "in vino veritas", that of "cum pietate felicitas"; and the method whereby he rises is by self-detachment or irony; for irony is virtually the ethical creed in disguise. But if a man is to find rest and satisfaction at this ethic stage on life's journey, he must be happy in it; if a life dominated by ideals of duty leaves him as miserable as before, it is obviously no solution to his life-problem. Schiller had already insisted on this before the end of the eighteenth century. There is, says Kierkegaard, still a higher stage, and that is the religious stage; and this third or religious stage is described in the last section of the *Stadier*, which is entitled *Skyldig?—ikke-Skyldig?* (*Guilty?—Not Guilty?*). In the box which contained the manuscript of *Skyldig?—ikke-Skyldig?*, Kierkegaard tells us, he found a playbill, a rose in a silver capsule, and a page torn from the New Testament; and these are the symbols

of the three stages. The transition from the ethic to the religious stage, which is not dwelt on in the *Stadier*, is elucidated in two other works, *Frygt og Bæven* (*Fear and Trembling*) and *Gentagelsen* (*The Recurrence*), which were both partly written in Berlin in 1843. I have described the final stage of Kierkegaard's spiritual pilgrimage as religious, but the reader who turns to *Skyldig?—ikke-Skyldig?* expecting to find a religious discussion will be disappointed; for here the old love-trouble is merely dished up anew, under a fresh pseudonym; the word religion is hardly mentioned at all. But religion for Kierkegaard has nothing to do with dogmas or beliefs; it is the intimately personal relation of the soul to God. To find God, man must be alone with his misery; God alone can help him to answer the riddle of his life—"guilty, or not guilty?" And he who has risen through sorrow to the religious stage of life's journey, is an outcast from his kind, an isolated exception; he stands alone. The significance of this ascetic and intensely personal interpretation of religion (which lost something of its negative aspect, however, in Kierkegaard's later writings) will be apparent immediately.

These two works are thus essentially subjective; they are Kierkegaard's own personal confession, his own dialectic broodings on his relations to Regine Olsen. He even sent *Enten—Eller* to her with the hint that its purpose was to enlighten her as to the motives of the crime he had committed against her. But no one was probably more astonished than she, at being asked to read her own by no means extravagant relations to the philosopher, out of the complicated metaphysical disquisition on passion which the book contains.

Enten—Eller was well received; even *Corsaren* (*The Corsair*), Goldschmidt's satiric journal, welcomed it. Kierkegaard, in fact, did not experience any kind of critical antagonism until after the appearance of the

third part of the *Stadier*, when P. L. Möller, an influential critic of the day, attacked him. This was not in *Corsaren*; but Kierkegaard, who evidently believed his position in Danish letters to be unassailable, unwisely replied, and in his reply described Möller's criticism as one of those disgusting attacks which were wont to appear in *Corsaren*; he even went further and complained that he alone, among the distinguished writers of Denmark, had not been singled out for attack by Goldschmidt's paper. *Corsaren* took up the challenge, and before very long Kierkegaard bitterly repented his words; that journal pursued him to the end with the most merciless ridicule and satire, and no doubt helped to darken and embitter his closing days. How deeply he was wounded is to be read out of the two hundred pages of his Diary which are filled with this controversy.

This is not the place to deal in detail with Kierkegaard's purely theological activity, although its significance, especially for Denmark, was quite as great as his writings on aesthetic and ethical questions. Has not Brandes claimed for him that he is the greatest religious thinker of the entire nineteenth century? The militant character of Kierkegaard's individualism first assumed its full proportions in his interpretation of religious doctrines. Some three months after *Enten—Eller* appeared *To Opbyggelige Taler* (*Two Edifying Addresses*), in which he faced the difficult problems of reconciling the essentially social Christian faith with his own uncompromising individualism. The idea of altruistic Christian love put peculiar difficulties in his way, which he ultimately solved by defining that love, not as an immediate relation of one human being to another, but as an indirect relation through God. Individualism is, throughout, the touchstone of Kierkegaard's Christianity; dogmas fall away as disputable and immaterial; he seeks neither consolation nor sympathy; his faith is a personal matter and a personal

matter only. His next step, under the pseudonym of "Johannes Climacus", was to define the psychological basis of belief, and to destroy that philosophical optimism which had invaded Danish theology in the train of Hegelianism; this is the theme of *Filosofiske Smuler eller en Smule Filosofi* (*Philosophical Bits, or a Bit of Philosophy*, 1844), and—his chief philosophical work—*Afsluttende uvidenskabelig Efterskrift til de filosofiske Smuler* (*Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Bits*). His next step was—and again under a pseudonym, "Anticlimacus"—to declare war on the Danish Church; this is the main burden of the two works *Sygdommen til Døden* (*Sickness unto Death*, 1849) and *Indøvelse i Christendom* (*Practice in Christianity*, 1850). Here, too, he set forth his own faith in its more positive aspects. Of Christian charity, of the poetry and sentiment which the Church has woven round the figure of its Founder, he will hear nothing. To be a Christian is to be a fighter, whose hand is against every man's in the holy cause of God against the world. All Kierkegaard's life was one long tussle with the powers of orthodoxy, and possibly he might himself have ended altogether outside the pale, had he not been bound by strange, mystic bonds to his dead father. In the end it was the Galilean that conquered; but the Christianity in which Kierkegaard died was darkened by renunciatory pessimism. Christianity had become to him a sinister power exerted by a merciless Deity, a Moloch, who had at all costs to be appeased.

Kierkegaard's life, like that of the great German, Lessing, who had the warmest place in his heart, ended amidst the storms of theological conflict. His last publications were an attack on Bishop Martensen—and, with him, on the whole official hierarchy of the Danish State Church—for daring to stand up before the world as a witness to the truth; he passionately denied the right of Martensen to be regarded as a true representative of apostolic

Christianity. His last book, a periodical, *Øjeblikket* (*The Moment*), was in course of publication when he fell ill, and on October 2nd, 1855, he became a patient of the Frederiks Hospital. He was well aware that the terrible spinal disease from which he suffered would be fatal, and that death was inevitable; and he faced the end with the bravery, or it may be only the stoical indifference, which is one of the compensations of a brooding temperament like Kierkegaard's. He himself felt that his mission in the world was completed; his intellectual powers were slipping from him, and his worldly means were all but exhausted. His death took place on November 11th, 1855; he refused the ministrations of the Church, and would see no priest, not even his brother who was a bishop. His grave is adorned with no monument; the wish he once expressed was not fulfilled: "If I were to wish for an inscription on my grave, I should desire nothing but the words, 'Hin Enkelte' ('The Unique'). If the meaning of this is not yet comprehensible, it will be some day."

The image of Denmark's greatest thinker which has stamped itself on the mind of his own people, is essentially a grotesque one. *Corsaren* was, no doubt, in part responsible for this; but, as we have seen, Kierkegaard inherited much of his father's eccentricity; an eccentricity which became more marked as he grew older. His ludicrous figure, in his old-fashioned coat, his trousers bagging round his spindle legs, and his umbrella sticking through his arm, was familiar to everyone; for he took his regular walk every day at the same hour through the same busy streets. A more dignified memory of him was associated with his long pedestrian or carriage tours, always alone, in the country around Copenhagen; and a sense of awesome mystery was awakened by his suite of brilliantly lighted rooms, each of which was provided with a desk and writing materials; for here the lonely thinker paced up and down, night after

night, thinking his lonely thoughts, and writing his mysterious books.¹

It is doubtful whether Danish critics have even yet fully recognized how closely Kierkegaard's thoughts and activity were bound up with those of the Romantic movement in Germany and Scandinavia.² I do not refer merely to outward indebtedness in matters of form and style—that Jean Paul-like grotesqueness of humorous phrase—but rather to the essentially Romantic character of his philosophy. The Danes are themselves disposed to look upon him rather as an antagonist of German Romanticism; but he was, in reality, only an antagonist of the later, decadent aspect of the movement, which manifested itself in the passive resignation of Romanticism to Catholicism and absolutism, its confusion of thought and feeling, and its enthrallment by Hegelianism. So far from regarding Kierkegaard as an antagonist of Romanticism, I would rather claim him as one of the very few representatives then left in Europe of the fundamental doctrines of the early Romantic School. I can think, at least, of only two European books, in the thirties and forties, which, amidst an almost universal abnegation of individualism, stood firm by the old Romantic faith in the supreme value of personality. These are *Enten—Eller* and *Sartor Resartus*.

Sören Kierkegaard thus stands out as a pioneer and apostle of modern Romantic individualism. The significance of *Enten—Eller* is that it is an outstanding plea for individualism, as opposed to the levelling collectivism of the Hegelian philosophy—and in the hands of the Danish Hegelians, Heiberg, Martensen and Rasmus Nielsen, just this side of the Hegelian philosophy had been accentuated. To a

¹ Cp. Brandes, *op. cit.*, pp. 251 f.

² Brandes in his *Den romantiske Skole i Tyskland* has much to say on matters of detail concerning Kierkegaard's relations to the German Romantic School (cp. especially *Saml. Skrifter*, IV, pp. 220 f., 250 ff., 331 ff.). See also G. Niedermeyer, *Sören Kierkegaard und die Romantik (Abhandlungen zur Philosophie und ihrer Geschichte, XI)*, Leipzig, 1910.

philosophy that saw in individuals merely units in the great entity, humanity, or, at best, the bearers of an "idea", Kierkegaard opposed a claim for the supreme importance of the individual. Personality is to him the one thing that matters. Each human being must face the life-problem in his own way; and he must have complete freedom to do so. He must cultivate that inwardness of soul which takes no count of the world outside him; he must live the personal, isolated life. As the representative of this essentially modern creed, Kierkegaard struck the keynote for the Scandinavian literature of the later nineteenth century; his was virtually the message on which that literature has risen to greatness and influence in Europe. The passionate plea for the rights of personality which rings all through Ibsen's later work, from the banging of the door in *A Doll's House* to the transcendental individualism of *When We Dead Awaken*, was also Kierkegaard's; and the sinister, gloomy faith of Brand is an embodiment, carried to its logical extreme, of the third great stage, the religious stage, in Kierkegaard's life journey.

HENRIK PONTOPPIDAN

HENRIK PONTOPPIDAN is not entirely unknown in England, two volumes of his long novel, *The Promised Land*, having been translated into English more than twenty-five years ago.¹ But I cannot find that these books were regarded by us as betokening a new departure of any particular significance. Even Scandinavia itself—distraught as its literary opinion so often is, by virtue of the very smallness of its literary public—has not, I think, quite realized Pontoppidan's strength and originality. There are, it is true, obstacles in the way of his popularity: he is depressing, often repellent in his ruthless pessimism and bitterness. But the writer who, sharing in the heritage of Dostoevsky and Tolstoi, tries to penetrate honestly into the heart of things, is more likely to be unpleasant than attractive. He is lacking, too, in a quality which often commends to our public a writer who persists in harrowing it with disagreeable things—that of having a “purpose”: on the contrary, no writer of our time has so completely attained that dispassionate objectivity, that “distance” which Stendhal proclaimed indispensable to a great realistic art. Pontoppidan takes no sides in his books, and—in his three great novels, at least—he leaves his readers without a hint as to which side he would like them to take.

The distinguished Danish literary historian, Vilhelm Andersen, has recently published a study of Pontoppidan,² from which some interesting data of the

¹ *Emanuel, or Children of the Soil* and *The Promised Land*, both translated by Mrs. E. Lucas and published in 1896. One of the short stories (*Mimoser*) was also translated by G. Nielsen in 1890 under the title *The Apothecary's Daughters*.

² Vilhelm Andersen, *Henrik Pontoppidan: et nydanske Forfatterskab*, Copenhagen, 1917.

writer's life and career may be gleaned. The name is an odd one, a remnant of the intellectual snobbery of the Reformation humanists: "Pontoppidan" is a Latinization of the Danish "Broby", "bridge-town". The family played a considerable part in the higher life of Denmark. There was a famous Bishop, Erik Pontoppidan, a stern upholder of orthodoxy in the seventeenth century, who, in 1643, published the oldest Danish Grammar in Latin; and another Erik Pontoppidan, an equally orthodox pietist, published exactly a hundred years later a novel, *Menoza*, of the heroic and moralizing type which was then still popular, a book about an Asiatic prince who wanders through the world in search of Christians. This was well enough known outside Denmark to tempt the German poet, Lenz, to make a drama of it. The novelist's grandfather and father were both clergymen, and he was born at Fredericia in Jutland in 1857. When he was six, his father was transferred to Randers; and at the Latin school of that town the boy received his education. In 1873 he came to Copenhagen, where, after a year's preparation, he entered the Polytechnic Institute with a view to a career as an engineer. But his course was never completed. On a walking-tour in Switzerland he discovered his literary talent through falling in love; and after some unsatisfying experience as a teacher, he definitely resolved to make literature his profession. This was in 1879, and his first book, *Stækkede Vinger* (*Clipped Wings*), came out in 1881. It is a collection of stories, the most considerable of which, *Kirkeskuden* (*The Church Ship*, i.e. the model of a ship hung up in church), strikes one as a quite remarkable production to have been written by a youth of twenty-two. The book was sufficiently successful for Pontoppidan to marry on the strength of it, and settle down to a very modest existence in Ostby. His first wife, from whom he was separated in 1891, came of pure peasant-stock; and in these years of his life Pontoppidan stood in the

closest relations with the Danish peasant. This provides the keynote for the first period of his career as a writer. In 1884, on a visit to Copenhagen, he made the acquaintance of Georg Brandes,¹ and this no doubt helped to widen his horizon; still more important would appear to have been a meeting with Goldschmidt, shortly before the death of the latter in 1887. Goldschmidt's influence on Pontoppidan's style, as on that of all his contemporaries, was no doubt considerable. From this time on Pontoppidan gradually emancipated himself from the narrow world of the peasant, a process that was completed by his second marriage in 1892. Since then he has led a busy literary life, partly in the provinces, partly in Copenhagen, where he now lives.

The list of Pontoppidan's works is an imposing one and may well dismay the conscientious reader who sets out to know it in its entirety. But most of his lesser stories group themselves conveniently round three great novels, *Det forjættede Land* (*The Promised Land*, 1892-5), *Lykke-Per* (*Lucky Peter*, 1898-1904), and *De Dødes Rige* (*The Kingdom of the Dead*, 1912-16). These three works seem to me quite the most considerable contribution to the literature of the North, which has been made by any single writer in the present generation. "If one were to ask", says Brandes, "from which Danish writer is to be obtained the truest and most comprehensive idea of Danish ways of living, feeling, and thinking, of the outlook of representative people in Denmark in the last generation, of country as well as town, there is hardly any doubt that the answer would be: from Pontoppidan."²

Det forjættede Land appeared after the author had served a long apprenticeship in short stories and sketches of peasant life. In these stories, *Landsbybilleder* (*Pictures from Country Towns*, 1883), *Fra*

¹ There is a suggestive essay by Brandes on Pontoppidan, in *Fugleperspektiv*, Copenhagen, 1913, pp. 1-21.

² G. Brandes, *Fugleperspektiv*, ed. cit., pp. 2 f.

Hytterne (*From the Hovels*, 1887), *Skyer* (*Clouds*, 1890), we see him gradually feeling his way through a literature of peasant stories richer than any other in Europe, to an art and style of his own. A comparison with the older and more complacent work of Winther, Schandorph and even Blicher, shows how wide a gap separates the art of a generation ago from that of to-day, while even the vigorous romantic realism of Björnson seems to grow, by juxtaposition with Pontoppidan's, a little more romantic and a little less real. But Pontoppidan's horizon is narrow; his view, as he himself tells us, is limited "by what one can see from a Zealand hill"; and this narrowness of outlook has to some extent passed over into *Det forjættede Land*. The book is long, wearisomely long, being in reality three books fused into one. It is a novel of the provinces, in which Copenhagen is only a very distant speck on the horizon; a novel about peasants and pastors; and although Pontoppidan's competency to paint the Danish peasant cannot be impugned, although he knows the Danish clergy as no other, from the Copenhagen bishop to the wandering revivalist or the "stickit minister" who becomes a "polar bear" in his Greenland exile (*Isbjörnen*, 1887), this does not relieve the book of a certain drab monotony. Grundtvigian efforts at enlightenment stamp it as a picture of the eighties of last century, and supply an element of healthier idealism; but even this is neutralized by the author's Flaubertian dislike of the province, which he but ill succeeds in concealing. The story of *Det forjættede Land* is summed up by the inscription, which Pastor Petersen, the spokesman of a redeeming sanity, says should be put upon the hero's grave:

Here lies Don Quixote's double, Emanuel Hanstedt by name, who was born to be an honest man, but regarded himself as a prophet and a saint; who in consequence clothed himself in the garb of a herdsman, and held every inspiration that occurred to him to be a special call of Heaven; who

bungled everything that passed through his hands . . . but, notwithstanding, regarded himself to the last as chosen by Providence to prepare for the coming of the millennium (*Dommens Dag*, v, 2).

Det forjættede Land is a sombre book, a story of that hardest of all tragic fates, disillusionment. The moral, if one may speak of a moral in a writer so studiously amoral as Pontoppidan, is that the idealists and dreamers, the geniuses of the world, are hopelessly in the wrong; that the price must inevitably be paid by all who, either by their gifts or their ambitions, dare to raise themselves above their fellows. That Pontoppidan has been influenced by Ibsen's *Brand* is hardly to be gainsaid; Emanuel is a prose Brand, Brand in a specifically realistic *milieu*, a Brand in whom all the torments to which such a nature is exposed are relentlessly laid bare, as they could not be in five acts of trochaic verse. The pitiful sacrifice of Emanuel's child has clearly been suggested by the similar incident in Ibsen's drama.

Disillusionment, too, is the theme of *Lykke-Per*; but *Lykke-Per* is planned on a much broader basis, and is more closely knit together than its predecessor. It seems to me, indeed, easily the most powerful novel of modern Denmark, and even a landmark in the development of realistic fiction in Europe. Pontoppidan's horizon had widened; one sees it in the more varied range of the shorter stories which preceded and accompanied *Lykke-Per*. To these belong the little story *Ørneflugt* (*Eagle's Flight*), to which Andersen gives typical significance, as containing the quintessence of Pontoppidan's art. Here, as in most of his work at this time, he is clearly searching for new moral values—"the rights of passion and the great emotions". This is to be seen in the story entitled *Mimoser* (*Mimosas*), on which the controversies evoked by the *Doll's House* and Björnson's *Gauntlet* have left their mark. Or again, he may seek new social and political ideals, as in *Nattevagt* (*Nightwatch*), *Den Gamle Adam*

(*The Old Adam*), and *Det Ideale Hjem* (*The Ideal Home*), with its fantastic plea for a new society built up on matriarchal principles. As a story, *Lille Rødhætte* (*Little Red Riding Hood*), the title of which is apt to mislead, is, of all that Pontoppidan wrote in what might be called his *Lykke-Per* period, likely to make the deepest impression on the reader.

Lykke-Per is, no doubt, an intimately personal book, how personal it would not be fair to Pontoppidan the artist to attempt to gauge. But the Latinized name of the hero, Per Sidenius, is significant; he, too, like the author himself, is a pastor's son; he, too, comes to Copenhagen to become an engineer, and fails. Unlike its predecessor, *Lykke-Per* plays largely in the Danish capital, although Copenhagen is rather one-sidedly represented by Jewish circles. Pontoppidan's realism is extraordinary in its minute detail, and in its ruthlessness—that inevitable accompaniment of the art of seeing things exactly as they are. The book is studded with portraits of contemporaries: in Dr Nathan, for instance, Georg Brandes is depicted with a vividness which no mere description can convey; Enevoldsen is the master-spirit of the previous generation, J. P. Jacobsen; and Holger Drachmann, Pontoppidan's chief antagonist in the Danish literary world, is not forgotten. Essentially true, too, is the picture of the "Gjennembrud"—the "break-through"—in Danish thought and literature in the eighties and nineties of last century, and of that conflict—by no means confined to Denmark—between industrialism and science (of which Sidenius is the self-constituted champion) on the one hand, and the ideal claims of poetry on the other. But against this background a tragic fate is unrolled. *Lykke-Per* is the book of a man who is at war with life, but his is not one of those great inspiring wars, that lift men to a higher plane; it is a bitterly cynical war. Even Emanuel Hanstedt, with all his quixotry, has more of the redeeming qualities of the tragic hero than Per Sidenius. Sidenius

is a "problematic nature", but of a much more complicated and subtle kind than that of the hero of Spielhagen's famous novel, which held the mirror up to the Europe of seventy years ago; he is the Aladdin of Oehlenschläger transported to a very modern world; an Aladdin in the most realistic surroundings, an Aladdin spiritualized by the delicate art of *Niels Lyhne*, and decked out with something of the fantasy of that other Aladdin of the north, Peer Gynt. Good fortune falls to Sidenius just as the oranges fell into Aladdin's turban; but he, too, is powerless to make that good fortune his own. The simple truth is summed up in one sentence: "If, in spite of all the success he enjoyed, he had not been happy, it was because he *would* not, in the ordinary sense of the word, be happy." (*Lykke-Per. Hans sidste Kamp*, iv.)

Although Pontoppidan holds no flattering mirror up to Danish national characteristics, his *Lykke-Per* is, none the less, a deeply national book; in spite of much that is distorted and exaggerated, it does reflect the Danish temperament, "the passionless Danish folk with the pale eyes and the timid soul", as it had never before been reflected.

Thus it had always been in Denmark. One generation after the other grew up, red-cheeked and clear-eyed, free-minded and strong, and one generation after the other has sunk into the grave, broken, bent, always vanquished. It is as if some hidden disease consumed the strength of the nation, sucked out the marrow of its best youth, and exposed the country as booty to the lust of foreign conquest (*Lykke-Per. Hans Rejse til Amerika*, iii.).

These heroes of Pontoppidan's are tragic figures, not because they do not get what they want: on the contrary, in one sense they all enter their "promised land": but they are disillusioned when they get there. *Lykke-Per* is one long tragedy of the lucky mortal who gets all he wants. It is the tragedy of the will which set in seriously, far back in the nineteenth century in European literature, with

Grillparzer in Austria. This is what constitutes Pontoppidan's pessimism: his tragedies are not tragedies of heroism spent in vain, or of superhuman renunciation, but of the failure to respond to success, to act, to seize the fleeting moment, to admit the happiness that stands waiting on the threshold. Sidenius goes out into the world with great gifts and sincere intentions; he is buffeted, crushed, jeered at, disillusioned: life grinds the spirit out of him: he does not die fighting, like Emanuel Hanstedt—even if it be only fighting windmills—with the halo of sanctity around him, but in abnegation and spiritual paralysis.

The most recent phase of Pontoppidan's development is represented by a long novel, the last volume of which appeared after the curtain had risen on the Great War. In some respects, *De Dödes Rige* has less claim to be regarded as a single book than its predecessor; it is rather a cycle of stories held together with difficulty by the continuity of the characters. Indeed, the first two sections give the impression that, when they were written, they were not meant to converge at all, and that the connection was really an afterthought. But apart from this lack of unity, the new novel is a finer and maturer work. It is, none the less, true to the old realism; perhaps truer than before; but the ruthless element has been eliminated; the persistent "j'accese" of *Lykke-Per* has disappeared. The pictures of Denmark—and they range from Funen in the south to Jutland in the north, and again to Copenhagen—are extraordinarily delicate and clear. I cannot think of any other modern Danish book that makes the poetry of Copenhagen so real to us as this; the Copenhagen of sea-mists creeping up from the Sound, of overcrowded streets, glistening in the lamp-light; its noisy trams and drab suburbs with the work-people tramping homeward. We get to know the Danish Rigsdag, the Copenhagen newspaper offices; one could point to the

very house on the St. Annæ Plads where the great Enslev died : the flat in the Drönningens Tværgade where Jytte Abildgaard and her mother lived.

The "Danish folk with the pale eyes" is here seen from a new angle ; seen in its political life. Enslev, the political leader, is, no doubt, under something of a disguise, Sverdrup. The portraits of this book surpass in psychological delicacy those of the earlier novels ; in fact, one recognizes certain types of figures which had already appeared in other books, but which are here raised to a higher artistic power ; for instance, the fine figure of the rebel priest, Mads Vestrup. Torben Dihmer, who may be called the hero only in so far as he is the most persistent male figure throughout the book, is one of the most complex portraits in Pontoppidan's gallery ; and the charming Jytte Abildgaard is far more living than the often theatrical Jacobæ of *Lykke-Per*.

The hero of *Lykke-Per* in a moment of introspective clairvoyance realizes that "there is no other hell than that which men, in their fear of ghosts, make for themselves" ; and that he is himself but a ghost, wearing out his life in the vain fight with incorporeal shadows. This thought is followed out in the last book. The kingdom of the dead is the kingdom of the past, of the people and things that have been, and are now but memories. The world has become the dream ; the real the unreal ; life is a mere blind fighting of the air, and Torben Dihmer comes back from this world as from a journey in the kingdom of the dead, back to the one reality of his own lonely life. If *Det forjættede Land* is a kind of *Brand* in Pontoppidan's work, and *Lykke-Per* is his *Peer Gynt*, here he has reached the stage of *When We Dead Awaken*—awaken from the kingdom of the dead to a new kingdom of the living. *De Dödes Rige* is a mellow, less rasping book for delicate nerves than *Lykke-Per* ; a gentler renunciation lies over it ; but the pessimism, if less militant, is unabated.

I have spent so much time over these three long books, that it is impossible to do justice to the fine art of Pontoppidan's smaller pictures ; but there are some wonderful stories among these, the early ones romantically exuberant in youthful spirits, the later ones reflecting the darkening mood, the problem and the conflict. One of the sources of charm in these stories, as in the larger books—for they do not pretend to charm by wit or brilliancy of style—is a striking freshness of situation. Things happen here which in no way conflict with probability, and which yet never happened before in fiction. Who, for instance, can forget that scene where Sidenius goes down to the wharf to accompany his mother's coffin to its last resting-place in Jutland, and sees it hoisted into the hold like any other bale or packing-case ? This originality of outlook on the facts of life is perhaps what best maintains the interest in the loosely bound fabric of *De Dødes Rige* ; there is hardly an incident here which is not stamped with this peculiar distinction. The shorter stories show more clearly Pontoppidan's personal conviction on matters of "actual" interest ; his antipathy, for instance, to anything that savours of lyricism or romanticism ; his democratic faith in the future of the proletariat, and his—for an imaginative writer strangely incongruous—hope in the ultimate triumph of scientific materialism over poetry : even his Tolstoi-like contempt for art. But it matters little whether such views are the author's or not, or whether they appeal to us or not ; it is the great impersonal art of his books that matters. It has been urged that, with M. Rolland's *Jean Christophe*, the age of the old Flaubertian realism has definitely passed. I am not so sure of it. In these books, at least, are revealed new potentialities of the old realism, potentialities that rest on the spiritual and the psychological, no less than in the faithful reflection of real things.

STRINDBERG'S POSITION IN EUROPEAN LITERATURE

TO speak adequately in the space of a brief hour about a writer of such varied activity as Strindberg—about so extraordinarily complex a personality—is, of course, impossible. I do not know whether I shall have time even to place him, as the title of my lecture promises, in the extraordinarily intricate web of literary movements of which he forms a part. But I trust I may be able to help in that direction. In any case, I want to look at him, not from within, as a national Swedish writer, but as a defining force in the European literature of the last generation or two.

It is a difficult task ; for in some respects it might be said that Strindberg made his début in European literature under an unlucky star. He emerged into fame, outside his native land, at the end of the eighties of the last century, when his two plays, *The Father* and *Lady Julie*, were performed on French and German stages, and were looked upon as the advance guard of a more ruthless naturalism than had hitherto been dreamt of. We were not then in a position to gauge their positive value for future developments of the theatre ; and they left an unpleasant taste in the mouth. Again, the Strindberg of that time was somewhat exclusively associated with his bitter antagonism to the other great Northman of the time, Henrik Ibsen ; and those who had greeted *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts* with acclamation—and who then did not?—as harbingers of a healthier social ethic, were estranged by this contemner of women and preacher of a retrograde sex-philosophy. And finally, when Strindberg

published that most terrible of autobiographies, *The Son of a Bondswoman*, with its still more devastating sequel, *Pontoppidan*, that our first repugnance to the man was justified; and such opinion assumed a kind of stereotyped form. Many students of contemporary literary movements had not got far beyond this stage when Strindberg died, in 1912.

At every step in his unhappy, stormy life, Strindberg's worst enemy was himself. All his books are, like Goethe's, fragments of a life-confession; but while Goethe built up with his works the lordliest temple of a life that the history of our race has to show, Strindberg's long life-confession is negative, misleading, even false. He has given us, not a temple, but a heap of ruins; he has left us, of a later time, to put together and build up the life which he has presented to us in so distorted a shape. Strindberg's autobiographical writings belong to the aggressive type of "confession" which Rousseau invented. They are books that will tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth; he revels morbidly in a ruthless self-revelation and self-abasement, which it needs considerable objectivity on the reader's part to accept without wincing. But outspokenness does not necessarily connote "truth". With the best will in the world, as Heine once said, no man can tell the truth about himself. "No one"—I quote his words in the *Geständnisse*—"has ever succeeded in doing so, neither St. Augustine, nor Jean Jacques Rousseau, least of all the latter, who called himself the man of truth and nature, while he really was, at bottom, more insincere and unnatural than his contemporaries." The autobiography that professes to "reveal everything" is never true; for the more an author insists on ruthlessly telling the truth, the more ready is he to fall into the illusions of self-interpretation. When Strindberg presents himself to us as a modern Ishmael, whose hand was against every man, while every man's hand was against him, he is reflecting only one phase of

his life, reflecting that instinctive sympathy with the lower classes and revolt against upper-class oppression which he imagined he had inherited from his bondswoman mother; he is by no means providing a formula for his whole extraordinarily variegated life, or even explaining the particular sympathy and antipathy on which he dwells. In later years, Strindberg himself admitted that his autobiography was too highly coloured by the mood in which it was written. For us, for the discriminating student who wishes to reconstruct Strindberg's life, the book is an eloquent testimony to the interpretation which the new science of psychology is putting on Wordsworth's line: "The child is father of the man". The whole Strindberg, unconscious as well as conscious—and this I would emphasize—is rooted in the harrowing, unhappy experiences of his childhood and adolescence. It may be that his childhood was not as persistently unhappy as he makes it out to be; that perhaps, after all, the family did not prove, as he depicts it, the "worst of all human institutions". But his young life was full enough of crosses and conflicts, was lacking enough in love and sympathy, to have sown the seeds of a life-long neurosis in a sensitive child. However, "the people", he says, "who have grown up in a happy childhood seldom become great; for they have always some pleasant memories to look back upon, which means that they forget to look forward." Perhaps there is a great truth, and a compensation, in these words. In any case, the key to Strindberg's life, as to the lives of all men, is his childhood; and whoever wishes to understand Strindberg and the rôle he had to play in the world, must dwell on that childhood.

Johan August Strindberg was born in Stockholm in 1849, at a time when his father, a shipping-agent, was at the nadir of his fortunes. The family, numbering some seven persons, was crowded into three rooms in a large complex tenement overlooking the Klara

Church; the child's earliest years were filled with cuffs and scoldings and the perpetual friction of intolerably straitened circumstances, which, like the jarring sound of the *Kjara* bells, clanged discordantly all through his life. No wonder that the first lesson he learned was that the highest virtue consisted in sitting on a stool and keeping quiet. It was a home without sympathy; the ties between the child and his mother were more imaginary than real; and in words almost identical with those which the great German poet, Hebbel, used of *his* father, Strindberg said: "My father I always felt as a hostile force, and he could not suffer me either." The harrowing descriptions, full of untempered recrimination, which Strindberg gives of his childhood, explain a very great deal in his books. Many of the tragic motives of his later work are to be traced back to these early impressions. The persistent atmosphere of hatred, the anarchic conception of the most sacred human relations, the perverse radicalism of his feud with social institutions, above all, his own soul-destroying war with himself, have their roots here. "The child is father of the man." That terrible discovery—the most terrible and disrupting discovery a child can make—that the lie is greater than the truth, which was early borne home to him when he received punishment for misdeeds that he had not committed, and reward for the false admission of unincurred guilt, provides one of the most striking and recurrent motives in the psychological maze of his stories and plays.

Life became pleasanter, however, as the child grew up; the family moved out to the suburbs, where they had a large garden. He was given an adequate schooling; but it is pathetic to read of the hardships that schooling involved. He had to rise at six on a winter's morning, wash in ice-cold water, and, after only a cup of rye-coffee and a roll for breakfast, trudge into Stockholm, with the prospect of a caning should he be late; often the snow would be so deep that it

came in over the top of his jack-boots. Most of his teachers seem to have been tyrants; and his later arraignment of education spring obvious ^{and} ^{at} ^{the} ^{expense} of his early sufferings. Can one wonder that the hero of his story of *Tschandala* says that the worst of all nightmares is to dream that one is again a boy at school?

In May 1867, he passed the examination which threw open to him the doors of the university; and he was sent to Uppsala. But things were hardly better here; his first attempt at a University career came to grief on his grinding poverty. He gave it up and became for a time a teacher in a Stockholm secondary school. Here the boot was on the other foot; the hell of school life appeared to him from the reverse side, that of the master, whose duty it was to inflict the misery. And, with all the physical privations of these years, young Strindberg was passing through one spiritual crisis after another. Religious disillusionment, which, after the narrow pietism inculcated by his mother, came with a rude shock, destroyed all possibility of that career in the Church which had hovered before him when he went to Uppsala. He was caught up by the new interest in modern science which at this time was invading Sweden from Germany; only to be thrown back on the great mystic of the North, Emanuel Swedenborg, with whom he was to seek refuge more than once in his storm-tossed life, and who was to become a dominating force in his later years.

At last a favourable turn came in his fortunes. He was taken into the household of a wealthy Jewish doctor, who, in return for the tutoring of his sons, undertook to defray the expenses of Strindberg's training in medicine. This household, with its liberal interest in art and literature, opened up new horizons. Strindberg threw medicine overboard, and thought of becoming an actor. This, too, was a failure; but suddenly one day he found his *métier*. The discovery of his literary talent came, as all things did in

Strindberg's life, like the sudden bursting of a Russian spring-time, came with an overwhelming rush. In less than a month he had written a play in three acts, a one-act piece in verse, and was planning a great drama round the figure of Christ. Thus Strindberg began his literary life as a dramatist, and his first seven works are dramas. I cannot dwell on these beginnings, interesting as they are. Enough to say that they obtained for him a royal stipendium which allowed him to return to the university. This was a happier time than the first, but nevertheless, it was almost a relief to him when the stipendium came to an end, and he was free to go, as he said, "out into life, out from the dreams and from past ages, to live in the present and in reality". He became a journalist; and then obtained a post in the Royal Library. The pleasantest events of these years were the occasional holidays in the Stockholm Skärgård. Here amidst the fisher-folk he found a refuge from miseries that had brought him to the verge of suicide. To Strindberg the sea was always the great healer, always what our Swinburne has called "the great sweet mother"; it invariably helped to restore him to health and mental balance. The Swedish Skärgård is the background of all that is healthiest and sanest in his literary work; and I can think of no poet of the north who has written with such splendid sympathy—a sympathy which we British people *can* understand—of the mystery and the magic of the sea. Not the Swiss Alps, he said, nor the olive-clad hills of the Mediterranean, nor the rocky cliffs of Normandy, could rival the Swedish islands in his heart. And in these years the two works were written which laid the foundation of his reputation: the drama *Master Olof*, and the novel *The Red Room*.

I should like to spend a little time on *Master Olof*; for, although the fact was not recognized until many years later, Strindberg did make with this, his first historical drama, a notable contribution to the literature of Europe. It is his first European achievement.

In many ways *Master Olof* is the most powerful, as it is the most popular historical tragedy Strindberg ever wrote, and that because he never again ~~for an~~ ^{one} ~~attempted~~ ^{was} ~~which~~ ^{no} ~~permitted of an inter-~~ ^{had} ~~ference~~ ^{liagenial} to his own temperament. But to us it appeals especially, for it stood out in the main stream, in the great movement of European ideas. Strindberg's portrait of the Swedish champion of the Reformation, Olaus Petri, is seen in the perspective of a great European work which had just then appeared in Swedish translation, Buckle's *History of Civilization*. Against the spiritual background of this work Strindberg unrolls a picture of the struggle of the North for spiritual freedom, that freedom which was to compel the Pope to "throw his keys into the sea, and the Emperor to sheathe his sword". But there is something still more actual, more European, than Buckle's interpretation of history, in *Master Olof*. Just in these years Strindberg had come under the influence of that pioneer of the individualism of the nineteenth century, the Danish thinker Søren Kierkegaard. In Strindberg's breast, two souls were wrestling for supremacy, the two souls which Kierkegaard defined as the ethic and aesthetic personality; and *Master Olof* is a testimony to the intensity of the struggle. Olof is Kierkegaard's "aesthetic" self-doubter, to whom is opposed the ruthless "ethic" revolutionary, the printer Gert. That was a very real conflict in the Europe of its time. One of the titles which Strindberg originally intended to give his drama was *Vad är sanning?* (*What is truth?*). This is its ethical kernel: this it owes to Buckle. All useful truths, he tells us, are transient: as soon as a man imagines he has found the truth, it immediately becomes an obstacle to his further development; or, as Lessing had put it a century earlier, it is the search for truth that matters, not the attainment of it. Strindberg's Olof, the enthusiast and the visionary, sets out prepared to sacrifice all, in his great fight for spiritual

emancipation; but alas, he is not of the stuff that Ibsen's Brand is made of: he is not strong enough to maintain the struggle against the forces of political expediency in verse, and, like allurements of wife and home, and, most harrowing of all, the curse of his dying mother, who sees in him only the victim of Satan. He compromises with the king; he bows his head, a renegade, an apostate to his ideal. In the end he asks himself: Is any truth so true that it is worth fighting for to the bitter end? It is a terrible question: one that has tortured great souls in all ages. Again, Strindberg was voicing the problematic conscience of his time. *Master Olof* is thus one of the great historical dramas, not merely of the North, but of Europe, an extraordinarily mature creation for a youth of twenty-three. When Ibsen was this age, he had not got much beyond his first play, *Catiline*.

I am not going to dwell on *The Red Room*, for although this novel is a landmark in Swedish literature, it is not, in the same sense as *Master Olof*, a European work. To us it is interesting that when Strindberg planned this book, he intended to follow in the footsteps of his favourite novelist, Dickens. His witty, exaggerated caricatures of Swedish life are, in some degree, Dickensian; but Strindberg had not, at bottom, the Dickens temperament; he had been too bitterly at war with life and his surroundings to rest satisfied with merely humorous caricature. *The Red Room* is thus not a Swedish *Pickwick Papers*, but rather a Swedish *Vie de Bohème*, seen across the temperament of a pitiless satirist. Later, it was followed by the still bitterer satires of *The New Kingdom* and *Black Flags*, very terrible books, which call up to us the full-blooded satire of the eighteenth century.

After the success of *The Red Room*, however, Strindberg entered upon a happier period of his life. I should like to have had time to speak of the new dramas he now gave us: of *The Secret of the Guild*, a drama that reminds us in many ways of Ibsen's

Master-Builder; or of *Luck*; *Peter's Travels*, a fantastic dramatic fairy-tale. This ~~to had attempted~~ ^{had attempted} considerable success upon ~~the stage~~ ^{the stage}; but ~~it had little or no~~ ^{it had little or no} equal merit to storm the Romantic citadel ^{by one} of the Romantic type of mind; Strindberg had not yet succeeded in finding again the key to fairy-land which the old Romantics possessed: his supernaturalism is still too much the supernaturalism of stage effects. That insight was not to come until years later, when the poet underwent his own terrible initiation into the world of the mystic and the unseen. Another work, *Sir Bengt's Wife*, is a fine drama in which Strindberg still appears as a sympathizer with the Norwegian attitude to women, as vindicated by Ibsen and Björnson. And to these years belongs too the volume of splendid stories—some of them masterpieces of realistic clairvoyance—included in *Swedish Fates and Adventures*.

Strindberg's literary activity in these years was extraordinarily rich; and it unrolled against a background of what for him was comparative happiness. In 1875 he met Siri (Sigrid) Wrangel (Siri von Essen), the wife of an officer, and became entangled in a love for her, the most passionate and the most fateful of his life. I cannot here enter into this, perhaps the most terrible love-story in the annals of literature; it has been laid bare by Strindberg himself with merciless cruelty, and, one might add, with merciless inconsistency, from three different angles, in three books from which I find it the hardest of riddles to reconstruct the truth. All I would say is that this love, which went down in the shadow of incipient insanity, began at least in comparative happiness, greater happiness than Strindberg, from the jaundiced standpoint of the terrible years, would ever admit. Until about 1883 Strindberg was happy with his Siri, as happy as a man of his uncomfortable temperament could be. In that year they visited Paris together, where they met Björnson and Lie; and in Paris the kindly welcome of the French world of letters opened up to Strindberg

the prospects of activity as a European writer. "Put yourself together", Björnson wrote to him, "be the man Swedish European. For to do so much better than I have done, I have written a good piece in verse, and in a few years to become great; for you can."

But this Strindberg would not, or could not, do. The social reformer in him got the upper hand; he dreamed great dreams of a European league of nations, which was then, at least, Utopian; he ruminated great schemes of social reform which should reinstate the peasant as the dominant factor in European politics. He sought refuge in Rousseau, as, in earlier life, he had turned to Kierkegaard, as in his dark later years he was to turn to Swedenborg. And yet, in spite of all this, I would insist that Strindberg was pre-eminently an artist, and a great artist; he had a masterly grip of the drama; he had at his command a prose style unique among the writers of the North, a power of seeing and describing, a discernment that penetrated the most subtle psychological and emotional problems; and he had written a number of short stories—he put the crown to them in the year 1885 with the splendid volume of *Realized Utopias*, written in Switzerland—which had not their superior in any literature in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It is to me, at least, a real tragedy to see this master mind, repudiating the mission which Björnson had shown him was within his grasp, and pouring unlimited scorn on all men who wrote without an ulterior purpose. The pity of it! Europe had plenty of writers able and willing to put their talents at the service of social causes, but few artists comparable to Strindberg, in the power and range of his genius. The pity of it!

But in these years he was beginning to suffer ; the sense of homelessness preyed upon him : his longing to be back in Sweden, in spite of the well-founded fear that he had more enemies there than friends, became intense. The shadows of persecution-mania began to

gates round him ; and from now on dates that mental instability which leaves its mark on all his later books. In 1884 appeared the first volume of the collection of stories, *Married—* ~~and prepared a very~~ ^{very} unequal merit, and still more unequal palatableness. ~~They were~~ ^{They were} written nominally in defence of the sanctity of marriage, but actually against what Strindberg regarded as disrupting forces : the demand for sex-equality and the emancipation of women which had been so warmly espoused by the sister-country, Norway. At bottom, they only show us in innumerable facets the disintegration of his own love for, and marriage with Siri von Essen. And to this period, too, belong the two naturalistic dramas, *The Father* and *Lady Julie*, which, as we have seen, established Strindberg's European fame. Had I had time, I should have liked to say much about these works ; for they form very important stages in the history of European realism. They mark a distinct innovation in the development of dramatic technique ; and they helped to break the tyranny of mid-century theatrical conventions. There is something, indeed, here, more revolutionary than ever Ibsen attempted ; and they were the forerunners of a new theatre, the "théâtre intime". But it would be idle to claim that they mean much to us to-day, nearly forty years after their production. The twentieth century only sees in them their repellent and unpleasant sides : the one a picture of the meaningless vindictiveness of an abnormal woman, who hounds her husband to death—who reminds us of the female spider which eats up its mate ; the other an equally repugnant picture of a neurotic woman's morbid passion for her father's lackey. As we see these plays now, it is not their unpleasantness we condemn ; for tragedy—even if it be *Macbeth* or *Hamlet*—never is a pleasant thing ; but rather the absence of any atmosphere of poetry, such as that with which Strindberg invested his *Master Olof*, and was to invest the great historical dramas of his later years. These plays were a brave effort to

emancipate tragedy from the domination of Aristotle, by divesting it of that pity, that positive outlook on humanity, which exalts and purifies us; but I fear the wise old Greek philosopher will not be so easily put out of court. Strindberg's enfranchisement of tragedy did not succeed, has not yet succeeded—any more than later when, abandoning his free conception of tragedy, he went to the opposite extreme, and justified the tragic sufferings of his hero as a punishment for misdeeds committed in a previous existence. The whole modern theatre from Strindberg to Mr Eugene O'Neill has been trying ineffectually to depose Aristotle. I fear it cannot be done. But we must not make too light of these efforts of Strindberg to win new land for the drama; in the history of the theatre the failures are often of more significance than the successes.

The early nineties were very dark years in Strindberg's life—years in which he passed through a veritable Valley of the Shadow: misery, poverty, despair, atheism. He plunged into alchemistic studies, laboured to prove that sulphur was no element, that iodine could be obtained by synthesis; finally to seek the philosopher's stone that would produce gold. His scientific experiments left their precipitate in a withering contempt for modern science; but—let us do him justice in his madness—behind it all is a grandiose conception of the oneness of the universe, which one likes to think the future may strengthen rather than refute. Surely no man of letters went through more terrible experiences—they are described for us in *Inferno* and *Legends*—than poor Strindberg in the solitary misery of Paris; it was the grand climacteric of a mind always morbidly unbalanced, and now hovering on the brink of irresponsible insanity. It seems to me sometimes as if in the fate of this one man, the whole bankruptcy of the later nineteenth century, the *fin-de-siècle*-ism of Europe, were concentrated. But gradually calm returned, and in the superb allegorical

—surely one of the most majestic in modern literature—*To Damascus*, Strindberg—this man, who, like Dante, ~~has been in hell~~—told the world in poetry of his terrible experiences ~~prepared for the whole gamut of~~ the tragedy of his love and marriage, his descent into the Inferno, his battling with the dark powers. And the Mephistophelian tempter is at his elbow. The Unknown, this Ahasuerus, on whom lies the curse of curses, the man who in his arrogant despair has defied God, finally returns to the bosom of the Church, creeps humbly to the Cross, to find rest at last in a convent for his storm-tossed soul. From *To Damascus*, the whole modern expressionist drama of northern Europe takes its beginning.

Convalescence came; and it would be unfair to leave Strindberg's life with the impression that it went down in unmitigated tragedy. It was given to him to write in his last years not a few masterpieces of prose fiction, which stand out against the lurid background of his own sufferings, and which stay and redeem the rapidly approaching bankruptcy of European realism; it was given to him to write a series of wonderful historical dramas, which have pointed the way to a new approach by the artist to the poetry of a nation's past. I have, alas, no time to discuss these historical dramas; but I sometimes think they represent Strindberg's most valuable and positive contribution to the imaginative treasure-house of Europe. If the historical drama ever comes into honour again, I am sure these works of Strindberg will have a great share in the revival. By the irony of things, Sweden—whose literature is so extraordinarily empty of dramatic works—came, as it were, to the rescue, when the European theatre stood on the brink of dissolution and ruin. I should like too to have dwelt on the imaginative splendour—so much deeper, so much more spiritual, than in the days of *Lucky Peter*—of the dream-dramas of these later years. I should have

liked to speak of the new solution Strindberg had now to offer to the problem of the realistic drama—again so different from the crudities of *The Father* and *Lady Julie*—in plays like *The Father*, *The Death*, and of the new art of the “*Kam Strindberg*”. *The Dance of Death* is an epical work in the realistic drama of Europe, at the turn of the century. And with the extraordinarily interesting little plays—of which *The Ghost Sonata* is among the best known—there begins a new genre in the literature of the theatre.

Strindberg's life did not resolve itself into harmony ; but it did not close entirely in discord. Let us take leave of him by thinking of two of his last works. The first is the final volume of his autobiography, *Alone*—the picture of the last calm in a life that had been one long series of storms. There is infinite pathos in this portrayal of a man who had been “ever a fighter”, and who comes back from the most terrible fight a man can have to face—the wrestling with the dark unseen powers—comes back to solitude. We think of Strindberg, a pathetic figure in his final refuge, the “Blue Tower” in the Drottningsgatan in Stockholm. And the other work I would turn to is the last drama, in which he has given us the spiritual quintessence of all his stormy life, the nearest approach he made to a solution of its great Sphinx-riddle. I mean *The Great Highway*. Strindberg depicts himself here as the huntsman who descends from the Alps and passes along the great highway of life, and sees the insincerity, the mockery and the futility of the world ; sees, too, the happiness he himself has missed—a happiness which is concentrated for him in a little red-roofed, green-shuttered house nestling beneath the fir trees in some sea-girt skerry—a summer day with wife and child—a supreme moment in life which this modern Faust was powerless to bid stay.

Strindberg was in touch with all the great movements of ideas in the Europe of his time. He burst many a bubble ; and led to deep and long searching

of ^{his} heart among his contemporaries. He faced the great problems of literary realism and carried that movement further than any in his time; he also destroyed it. And he ~~prepared the way for the future:~~ laid the foundations for a new drama—dramatism and expressionism which, in going far beyond the limits he had set, has for the moment at least overleaped itself; but we have not heard the end of expressionism yet; and I doubt not that Strindberg's example has still many lessons for us. And so, too, with his historical dramas; they open up new and unlimited vistas.

Strindberg is, indeed, an inexplicable, complex personality: a man of almost barbaric self-assertion and lack of restraint, a moral anarchist, a "problematic nature" if ever there was one; and yet, at the same time, a poet endowed with enormous, world-compelling genius—the nineteenth century has seen none more gifted. But no great genius ever fought against greater odds than he; he was the victim of his birth, of his upbringing, the victim of passions of hate and love beyond his own control; he went through life with few real friends, no love of the kind to resolve into harmony his war with life: all his efforts to confer gifts of social betterment—and Strindberg was filled with a consuming desire to uplift mankind—or of artistic beauty on his fellows were frustrated. Crushed and broken, despairing, mad—is it any wonder that his genius was often perverted to ignoble ends, that he had upon his conscience unforgivable sins against the Holy Ghost? We can only say again: the pity of it!

Whither had all the terrible suffering which Strindberg passed through in the nineties of last century led? Where was the change of heart? Where the Damascus? Was the humble prostration of this old Berserk at the foot of the Cross any more than a despairing yielding to the inevitable, the impotent renunciation of one who had been worsted in the

battle of life? Strindberg's conversion to Catholicism may have meant much or little; but what one does look for is some sign that he had not passed through the purifying fires of purgatory in vain; one looks for a ~~case~~ ^{case} the "mark on life, a kindlier sympathy with his fellowmen, a new-found nobility of soul; and how strangely little do we find! He never learned to see life calmly, never learned to see life whole; no real mellowness crept into his later years; he remained irreconcilable to the last. Nobility of soul, aristocracy of the spirit, this "son of a bondswoman" never attained. His books have abounding genius of the first order, and great transcendent qualities; but nobility of soul is surely not one of them. The comfort and consolation which Swedenborg's mysticism brought to Strindberg was, after all, only an enforced resignation to the powers, of evil as of good, whom he imagined to be in constant battle for the possession of his soul—powers that exacted expiation, not for his personal failures alone, but for crimes committed in some previous existence. And like his "Unknown", he had learned at last to make absolutely no demands on life. He who expects nothing, cannot be disappointed. That was Strindberg's defiant reply to the Powers that had wrecked his life. Such resignation may be poor consolation; to normal minds an absurd, a mad interpretation of the ways of God to man. And yet, given Strindberg's unhappy lot, his personal problem, what other solution was possible? After all, he was not the first man of genius to see himself thus, the plaything of the gods, at the mercy of hostile, ironically hostile adversaries. All genius demands some kind of explanation of itself and of its mission in the world; for what is genius but a condition of abnormality, which makes its possessor unable to fit himself into the web of normal humanity? Even Goethe, who stands at an opposite extreme of absolute sanity, cherished just such a philosophy; but spiritual balance made life easy for Goethe, and his

life-philosophy took on the form of an optimistic faith in ~~the~~ ^{the} goodness of God's world. But at bottom it involved the same fatalistic belief in a power outside ourselves, that ~~shapes~~ ^{shapes} our lives, "rough-hew them how we will". This power—or "daimon" as Goethe liked to call it—may only lie in nerve and temperament, in inherited spiritual constitution, but it is there all the same: a power, beyond our control, that may make life one great round of successful achievement, that may bring the right event at the right moment, and smooth the way of genius towards the highest achievement of which it is capable. Thus it was with Goethe; for his "daimon" was a friendly "daimon". But the "daimon" may be a power of evil, as well as of good; it may cross and thwart its victim at every step; burst every bubble of illusive hope; crush every aspiration with damning failure, until the writhing victim gives up the struggle. Such was the fate that hunted Strindberg to his Damascus.

The men who matter in this old Europe of ours are never those who bask in the sunshine of happiness and success; not those who flatter the popular prejudices and set their sails to the wind of popular taste. These have their reward; but whatever may be the reward of genius, it is not happiness. It is men like Strindberg, who are fighters against their time, men whose mission it is to shake the world out of its complacent sleep of convention and tradition—to shake it to its very foundations—it is the fighters against life, the rebels, not those who swim with the current, who make the wheels of progress go round. And such was August Strindberg.

III

ADDRESSES ON LITERATURE

LITERARY COSMOPOLITANISM

THIRTY years ago a great French critic published a work which was crowned at the time by the French Academy, and is still one of the fundamental books to which the student of the eighteenth century turns. I mean *Rousseau et les origines du Cosmopolitisme littéraire*, by Joseph Texte. Although the phrase "literary cosmopolitanism" was by no means new, this book, if I am not mistaken, did a great deal towards making it familiar in modern criticism. Literary cosmopolitanism became, one might say, an idea with which we had to reckon.

Now I propose to ask you to consider with me the nature, implications and possible future of this thing called literary cosmopolitanism. I believe it to be a matter which should interest every reader of books, whether he restricts himself to his own country or concerns himself with foreign literatures, whether he deals with ancient literature or modern. It is true that the cosmopolitan quality in a book or a poem may have a comparatively minor interest for peoples like ourselves, or the French, who possess as our heritage great self-sufficient literatures; we are not primarily concerned with, or interested in, the reflection of our literature in the foreign mind; nor do we feel a pressing need of formulating our attitude to foreign literatures. But in the case of the little nations who, to attain a European culture, have to look to the literary production of the world outside themselves, the problems of literary cosmopolitanism are very real and vital ones.

I am going to look at these problems first, however, from the historical angle. What is cosmopolitanism

as applied to literature? It is a quality, inherent in a work, which allows it to make a wide appeal to the cultured mind beyond the boundaries of the author's nationality. Perhaps you may say, if a work is inspired by indubitable genius, is great enough, this will follow. By no means. To the eighteenth century—pre-eminently, as we shall see immediately, a cosmopolitan age—the great dramas of the world were the dramas of Corneille, Racine, Voltaire. So far from being a cosmopolitan work, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was only laughed at as the acme of crude barbaric taste. And if we look at our English production in that century, we find that Richardson was a more cosmopolitan writer than Fielding, Lillo's *Merchant of London* a much more cosmopolitan play than quite unc cosmopolitan masterpieces like *The School for Scandal* and *She Stoops to Conquer*. Or again, at a later time, think of the supreme cosmopolitan appeal of Byron, and the entirely unc cosmopolitan, the restricted national appeal of Shelley, Wordsworth and Keats.

Thus literary excellence is, or was, by no means the conditioning factor in cosmopolitanism.

Cosmopolitanism, however, depends not merely on inherent qualities in the work of literature; it also depends on the power of appreciation—or a certain cosmopolitan spirit—in the hearer or reader. The problem has to be attacked from two sides, an objective and a subjective one; and I think we shall see that the latter is the more important.

There are ages in the history of literature which are particularly favourable to the cosmopolitan outlook, that is, ages when the boundaries of national taste disappear or are of little account. When Rousseau broke down the boundaries of French nationalism in the eighteenth century, it was by the infiltration of foreign romantic ideas. But in non-Latin lands—in England in the eighteenth century, Germany in the seventeenth century, and Sweden in

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the seventeenth century—there is an approach to the conditions of cosmopolitanism when the levelling intruder is not a spirit of romantic revolt like Rousseau's, but—just classicism.

Thus, however we may regard it, the condition of cosmopolitanism is, in the first instance, a certain homogeneity of literary taste among the nations which allows of wide mutual appreciation. It is obvious that such a basis of homogeneity was created when all European literatures came under the domination of the Renaissance, and adapted the forms of their spiritual vision to the classic idea. When Europe was agreed in regarding Vergil as the high exemplar of epic poetry and Seneca of the noblest tragedy, there was no difficulty in setting up cosmopolitan standards of literary achievement—standards which cut across and neutralized national idiosyncrasies.

Or let us look back to the Middle Ages. Here too we have cosmopolitanism. There are no national literatures in the modern sense in the Middle Ages; all the western literatures were dominated by the same ideals of form and content. The great Arthurian epic, born in the Celtic soul, is the common possession of Europe; it knows no nationality, no boundary of speech or state. The lyric of the Middle Ages is one and indivisible: and even the more national epics like the *Chanson de Roland* take on a cosmopolitan shape. Again there is cosmopolitanism in the eighteenth century. Once more—and for the second time in Europe's history—all the nations were thinking more or less uniformly, and creating a universally comprehended and appreciated literature. Let us first consider then what are the conditions which lead to the rise of such cosmopolitan ages.

Why were the Middle Ages cosmopolitan? You may say because the idea of nationality was but feebly developed; that was a contributory cause, but only a contributory, and essentially a negative one. The great positive reason was the universal domination

of the Mother Church and the concrete militant expression of that domination in the Crusades. In their splendid dream of the salvation of the Holy Sepulchre from the pagan, the Middle Ages saw a symbol of their highest aspirations: the knight of chivalry was the symbol of the reconciliation of the world and God. And it was this figure of chivalry that put a cosmopolitan stamp on the literature of two centuries, regardless of all national differences. Here then the cause lies outside literature itself; it is a social force, a binding political ideal: it is not primarily a uniformity of aesthetic taste.

But a condition of literary cosmopolitanism may obviously result from the universal acceptance of a standard of taste. This was practically what happened at the Renaissance. Once the nations were agreed that Aristotle and Horace were the supreme law-givers of literature, the basis was laid. The essential premiss was that there is one form of "good taste" and one only; and the effectiveness of classicism as a universalizing creed lay in its success in establishing this doctrine of one taste for all times and races.

But let us look more closely at the eighteenth century, which presents some very complicated problems. We are all agreed that that century was truly cosmopolitan. But the explanation of its cosmopolitanism is not at all so easy as we used to think: for it was by no means *only* an age of classicism. The eighteenth century was a century that looked both backwards on its royal line of classic descent from the Renaissance, and forwards to an age of essentially unclassic individualism. On the one hand, we find the persistence of the social and literary ideals of the age of Louis XIV, with the aristocratic dictatorship of literature; but on the other we see—and here England was the leader—the rise of a middle class which was by no means amenable to dictatorships of any kind. This middle class insisted, in literature as in the national life, on going its own middle-class way; and yet,

strange as it may seem, it proved in a conspicuous degree a cosmopolitan force in literature. The average Englishman of the eighteenth century was more a citizen of the world (I am thinking essentially of literary, not of political ideas) than his predecessor of the seventeenth, and quite certainly more than his successor of the nineteenth. He could travel all over Europe and appreciate with intelligent interest the literary activities of his day, in so far as language was no barrier—and the universality of French lessened the difficulties in this way. And the continental dweller could visit England; and the books he wrote about us show that he found here an ample basis for understanding us and our literature; even if he *did* find phenomena that seemed to him glaringly anachronistic and contrary to his idea of good taste.

There were, it is true, certain outward happenings at the very beginning of the century which predisposed it to a cosmopolitan attitude of mind.

For a hundred years the Huguenots had enjoyed freedom of thought in France. In 1685 they were deprived of this freedom by the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The result was that the flower of the French nation was scattered across Europe. These exiles settled in Holland, in England, in Germany, where they turned to their pens as a means of livelihood. They established great international reviews in Holland in which, in their own French tongue—then regarded as a universal literary medium—they interpreted the thought and the civilization into which they had been thrown. These journals were tremendous binding forces towards cosmopolitanism in Europe. But that does not explain everything; for it is still a mystery why these Frenchmen were able to open their minds so freely to the new life and literature around them. The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes was an external determining cause of literary cosmopolitanism in the eighteenth

century ; but I do not think that it was its ultimate cause.

I rather believe—and here I wish to express myself very tentatively, for I am embarking on an uncharted sea—that this ultimate reason is to be sought in a certain harmony amongst the peoples : in an underlying aspiration in the eighteenth century which was common to all Europe. The oneness of that century is to be crystallized in the little phrase “aspiration towards freedom”.

It was that aspiration which sent the Huguenots into exile ; the whole century, from the Revocation of the Edict to Goethe enthroned in Weimar as the spiritual monarch of Europe, is one long and gradual achievement of what Kant called growing enlightenment—which, taking a wider basis, we might call ever-widening human freedom. This aspiration towards freedom was the basic idea that bound the peoples together, bound them just as surely as the clarion call to fight the battle of the Christian faith in Palestine gave the middle ages one soul : or the sudden discovery of “the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome” created the being of the Renaissance.

All the deep-seated pedagogic tendencies of the eighteenth century aimed at the education and emancipation, at the freedom, of man. And each of the nations fought its battle for freedom in its own way. In England ours was fought in the House of Commons ; in France—long suppressed—there came a violent explosion, and freedom had to be won at the barricades of the Great Revolution ; and in Germany—the Germany of the shadowy Roman Empire and the innumerable petty principalities, a Germany with neither political life nor political freedom—the battle was fought out in the minds and souls of her people. Here it was a battle, not for political freedom, but for inward, spiritual freedom, a battle against the sinister forces of misdirected will and

misdirecting desire. Thus I think we may see that the deep organ note behind all the eighteenth century was this aspiration towards freedom; this in the end, and no mere external accident, made the literary cosmopolitanism of the century possible—gave it body and form.

Let us now turn to the idea of literary cosmopolitanism in the nineteenth century—the century of Romanticism.

Here, the same thing happened that had happened a hundred years before in France. The finest French minds became cosmopolitan. The emigrés, fleeing from the terrors of the Revolution, as Professor Baldensperger has just been showing us in his admirable study of the movement of ideas in the period of the emigration, are directly to be paralleled with the exiles of 1685: these men came into sympathetic contact with the thought and poetry of other lands, and provided the foundations for the later French Romantic School.

But is Romanticism to be regarded as a cosmopolitan movement similar to that of the early eighteenth century? Had the emigrés of the Revolutionary era the same effective cosmopolitan force as the emigrant Huguenots? I doubt it. The problem of cosmopolitanism was a very different one in the nineteenth century. To begin with, the new Romanticism was not built up on a “one and only good taste”: it brought with it complete freedom for all peoples to develop and cultivate their own peculiar national taste. Its slogan was unfettered individualism. The production of literature became, under its aegis, a national, not a cosmopolitan affair. It encouraged the cultivation of national idiosyncrasies, and as a result, the day of the little nations and the little literatures dawned. New national literatures sprang up, and those which had been painfully struggling to the light in the previous centuries burst out into their full pride and glory. Far from

finding a cosmopolitan literature, the student of the nineteenth century is faced with an enormous congeries of different national literatures and different tastes. We all know—to mention only the most conspicuous example—the splendid reaction of romanticism on the literature of the Scandinavian North.

Romanticism then was really hostile and destructive to literary cosmopolitanism in the old sense; in the era of steam and electricity, the peoples of Europe were spiritually and intellectually less united than in the age of lumbering stage-coaches and uncertain and costly posts. Romanticism meant individualism, and individualism meant the break-up of the literary cosmopolitanism of the eighteenth century. Every people went its own way, thought its own thoughts, gave its own form to its conception of poetic beauty.

Thus the nineteenth century, the most romantic century in the whole history of our race, is, at the same time, the least cosmopolitan. Nor do we find any essential change late in the century, when common European spiritual movements—the pessimism of the mid-century, the realism of the later century—imposed themselves upon literature; for these things took on very uncosmopolitan forms in the different literatures.

What the future may have in store for us, it would be unwise to try to prophesy. Perhaps the eternal cycle in human things, which the Italian philosopher Vico taught two hundred years ago, and Nietzsche in our own time, may once more restore to the peoples of Europe that community of thought which they knew in the thirteenth century and again in the eighteenth. I doubt it. Once the nations have tasted freedom, it is difficult to see how they can go back to enthrallment under un-national ideals.

I think it is, in any case, better to take things as they are, and to see if we cannot discover a new basis for the conception of literary cosmopolitanism.

This must obviously be sought, not in the levelling up—or levelling down—of poetic creation ; but in a development in the mind of the beholder, a widening of appreciation, a greater catholicity of outlook—something, indeed, which was essentially fostered by Romantic individualism. May we not be moving towards a new conception—a new formula of cosmopolitanism? May we not aspire to a mutual acceptance and appreciation of the great writers of other nations, without demanding that basis of common aesthetic and ethic values which was formerly regarded as the only passport to cosmopolitan significance?

Let me take as an example, one of the greatest spiritual forces of the later nineteenth century : Henrik Ibsen. No one would claim Ibsen as a cosmopolitan in the old eighteenth-century sense ; he is far too deeply rooted in his own Norwegian mother earth. Yet there are certain aspects—perhaps more than are generally recognized—in which Ibsen *is* a cosmopolitan. He came much into contact with the big world outside Norway : lived for many years of his life in Germany, Austria and Italy. But it is usually said that he held remarkably aloof from the literary currents in which he was placed. This may be true of his final years, the years of his last three or four social dramas ; but it was not always true.

In his early days, Ibsen lived, we might say, cosmopolitanly, in the *milieu* of Romanticism—even if his romanticism reached him at second hand through Denmark. He was seized, at a critical turning-point of his life, by the revolutionary idea of the rights of the individual personality, which a great Danish thinker, Sören Kierkegaard, in advance of his European compeers, had formulated in his mysterious, poetic, cryptic books ; and these ideas had, in Germany too, been embodied in poetic form by one of the deepest of German dramatic poets, Friedrich Hebbel.

Hebbel was a spiritual predecessor of Ibsen; and the Nora who slams the door, in asserting her right to be a human being, has indeed progenitors—progenitors outside Norway. And again when Ibsen proclaimed that the majority is always wrong, and that the strongest man is he who stands alone, he was but giving expression to a wave of disillusionment with liberal thought that just at that time was spreading across France, and from France to the rest of Europe. Or still again we might remember that the wonderful technique of the later Ibsen dramas was not an immediate product of the Norwegian soil, but had grown out of the social drama of France.

But all these pre-conditions of cosmopolitanism in Ibsen are metamorphosed into something new and definitely Norwegian; the eighteenth century might have said they were so distorted as to exclude Ibsen from the comity of European literatures. We saw, in fact, this attitude of mind towards him in English and French criticism at the end of last century.

And yet, in defiance of his lack of cosmopolitanism in the old sense, Ibsen *has* exerted a great and beneficial influence on the mind and dramatic poetry of Europe. He *has* forced himself upon it, not as a would-be cosmopolitan, like the representative dramatists of the eighteenth century, but as a national Norwegian poet. Our minds must adapt themselves to these new problems; in other words, we must evolve a new conception of cosmopolitanism, based not merely on tolerance for the national idiosyncrasy of a writer, but on appreciation of it as an essential and precious element in his work.

But Ibsen's case is a simple one; Ibsen has vindicated the demand that nationalism in a writer should be no barrier to his world power. It is otherwise with many other new forces in the literature of Europe in the last fifty years—otherwise with Ibsen's great contemporary Strindberg, and otherwise with

the many fermenting and disturbing forces among the peoples in the last generation.

This new conception has still far to go. We have still to learn, if not on our lips, then in our hearts, that the new cosmopolitan must not apply the same measuring tape to all imaginative production: that he must cultivate a wide-hearted, sympathetic tolerance. Nay, not tolerance, but a recognition that the real cosmopolitan writer is not the poet who cuts his coat and adjusts his taste to please all peoples: but he who gives fullest and truest expression to the aspects of his own personality and the soul of his own people.

Only on such a condition, it seems to me, can there be that reunion of the nations, for which we all—all of us who have suffered such grievous spiritual shipwreck in the Great War—devoutly and longingly look.

In bringing this, I fear, rather desultory talk to a conclusion, I would utter a word of warning against a barren form of literary cosmopolitanism which has been making itself conspicuous in recent critical work on the continent. The man who aspires to be a real cosmopolitan—and is not this the aim of all our studies of modern literature?—must guard himself carefully against becoming what our German friends contemptuously call an “Allerweltsmensch”. This is merely to ape the tastes of other peoples. I have found in so many recent continental works dealing with our English literature, the tacit conviction that perfection is achieved when the writer has succeeded in appropriating our national judgment, and when his opinion is the merest echo of what we—or often, where the present day is concerned, our glib journalists—think about our own literature. And I daresay if the writing of our English tongue were not such an infinitely difficult task, he would complete his own de-nationalization by giving us our own estimates in our own speech. This is not

literary cosmopolitanism. It is merely self-effacement—it is merely converting oneself into a superior, well-drilled parrot.

An Englishman, a German, an Italian, could never write a really great book about Racine which would be acceptable—completely acceptable—to the French people. That was not the way Carlyle wrote about German literature a hundred years ago; it was not thus that Matthew Arnold interpreted foreign literature; it is not the way by which a foreign literature can ever become a national possession and a real asset in a nation's spiritual life.

It is not the way by which Shakespeare has become a force in all the literatures of the earth. Germany's Shakespeare, France's Shakespeare is not our Shakespeare—if he were, “the less Shakespeare he”. The great poets of the world are great cosmopolitans, just in so far as they appeal in different ways and provide different spiritual nourishment to different peoples.

If we will look at and study French literature as the Frenchman looks at it, or German as the German, we shall never think thoughts about it that really matter to us as Englishmen. If the great modern literatures of the world are to be “humanities” to us, as the literatures of Greece and Rome have ever been and ever will be, we must regard them, *not* as false cosmopolitans through foreign spectacles, but as we have always seen Homer and Sophocles, Vergil and Horace—see them with our own eyes, judge them with our own judgment, and feel them with our own nationally attuned emotions. Only so can they add to our intellectual stature, and spread a beneficent, fertilizing stream across our national life.

THE SPIRIT OF TRAVEL IN MODERN LITERATURE

I HAVE been asked to speak to you this afternoon on the spirit of travel in modern literature. This is a delightfully roving commission, and might obviously provide material for a multitude not merely of lectures but of volumes. I propose therefore to deal only with some very limited aspects of the subject that seem to me of general interest, or at least of interest to the student of literature—and to myself.

The first of these is the remarkable paradox that, as the world has progressed and the means of travel have become easier and simpler : as the knowledge of the world as a whole has become more familiar through education, illustration, and (in our time) cinematograph reproduction—travel and foreign climes have become less and less a factor of significance in literature. They have been robbed of their character of what the old Italian theorists on literature called “*novità*”—novelty, strangeness, the unexpected. And we are faced with the fact that travel, exoticism of *milieu*, was a very much more important factor in ages when moving about the world was attended with difficulty and danger, than in the days of the railway, the steamship and the aeroplane.

I need not of course go back to the first great epic of travel, the *Odyssey*, or to the great wave of orientalism that spread across Europe as a consequence of the Crusades—these have doubtless been touched on in another lecture of this series, and my province to-day is post-Renaissance literature. And here I might dwell a little on the factor of travel and geographical

discovery in those centuries which form the foundation of our modern spiritual life. Writers innumerable have discussed the significance of the Renaissance for the modern imagination: the flood of light with which the discovery of the great past of our race dazzled and often blinded the men of those centuries, suddenly brought face to face with the achievement of Greece. That, too, if you like, was in a symbolic way a manifestation of the spirit of travel. For did not the human spirit here travel back, like Goethe's Faust, through the centuries, and discover a new unmapped country in the world of the spirit? Nor need I dwell on another aspect of the Renaissance, whereby man in that buoyant age discovered his own soul, his personality, his individuality—travelled into a world of psychological experience unreached by the men of the Middle Ages. Rather let us keep to the more literal aspect of travel: and here, I think, the significance of the rapidly growing knowledge of our planet in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries has never been adequately measured as a factor in spiritual progress and imaginative creation.

Copernicus, and at a later date Kepler, had destroyed the arrogant dream of men that their world was the universe—had shown that this globe was only one of many globes, our solar system a mere speck in the infinity of creation. And once the world was proclaimed to be round, the great voyagers of those centuries went out to prove it. Columbus set out westward to find the Indies, and discovered the new world: Vasco da Gama braved the terrors of the Cape of Good Hope on the same quest; and on land, adventurous travellers, beginning with the great Venetian Marco Polo at the end of the thirteenth century, penetrated far into the mystic wonderland of the East—which until then had meant only a dim tradition of the fabulous adventures of the great Alexander, or romantic memories of those of the Crusaders. The effect of this widening of the world

on the imagination of men was miraculous, and it is a factor no less significant than the discovery of Latin and Greek antiquity, or of the pride of personality—no less important than the spiritual revolt in northern Europe associated with the re-birth of mysticism and the Protestant Reformation.

And it stamped imaginative literature with a freshness that was never to return. This exoticism of foreign travel and adventure meets us on every hand: the fascination of the East and of fabulous lands beyond the seas, of the great unknown, which the luxuriant poetic imagination could at its own sweet will populate with dire monsters or with beneficent supernatural beings. The great Italian epics are full of such exoticism, and from these epics—above all from Ariosto—it spread to every literature in Europe. The old note of the *Odyssey* was revived; and the element of travel entered into the epic again with full force. Nowhere is this travel spirit more ingratiating than in the national epic of the Portuguese, the *Lusiads* of Camoens, which is pre-eminently an epic of the sea. Its central epic action—when we have stripped it of its eulogies of Portugal, past, present and to come—is the voyage of Vasco da Gama, round the Cape of Good Hope, to India and back, at the end of the fifteenth century.

But the *Lusiads* was written when the sixteenth century was more than half over. When we come to the seventeenth century, the element of travel in literature undergoes a change: it succumbs to that insidiously growing force of realism which has never ceased both to urge and to hinder the development of imaginative literature. The older epics—like the *Odyssey*—were content to depict the hero's personal experience in a world usually more fabulous than real, a world of which the poet himself knew little or nothing. The seventeenth century had grown in knowledge: nurtured on actual records of travel, it had begun to assume an almost morbid interest in new

and strange countries, in unfamiliar forms of civilization. Now, the foreign *milieu* unveiled by these travellers became the central element of interest—not merely an excuse for the hero's adventures. And the curiosity of the seventeenth century about foreign lands was unbounded. It was a great century of travel—perhaps the greatest—a century in which adventurers from every land in Europe penetrated deeper and deeper, especially into the East, and recorded their experiences and observations, discovering new domains for poetry and the imagination, as in the *Arabian Nights* and the Persian poets. I am not sure, indeed, whether we might not say that the re-discovery of the East is one of the biggest determining factors in the imaginative literature of that age.

This has left its imprint especially on the fiction of the seventeenth century, and through that fiction on the drama. The taste of Europe at that time demanded ever longer, more exotic novels, and the writers of these heroic novels, first in France and afterwards elsewhere, satisfied this craving by ransacking the records of travellers to provide their books with foreign colouring. And the East was particularly favoured. Men of a heroic mould fought over again the old battles of the ancient epics, but with strange new forces. The tropical world was depicted in luridly splendid colouring. Strange civilizations were described with greater or less—usually less—verisimilitude: customs and habits were dwelt on, and sometimes grafted rather incongruously on men and women who were obviously more at home at the court of Versailles. The fact is sometimes forgotten that the seventeenth century was a great century of foreign travel; but the books written by such travellers proved a mine that was industriously worked until quite late in the next century. Even the aristocratic and austere classic drama of France did not scorn to transplant its themes and its unities to grotesque

baroque *milioux*; or to clothe its personages in un-classic garbs of oriental splendour.

Thus the spirit of travel was responsible in the seventeenth century for a vast exotic literature, systematically cultivated. One of its curiosities is a series of now quite unreadable romances by an obscure German story-teller, E. W. Happel, near the close of the century, in which he set to work, in a series of novels, to embody a description of the whole world in romance.

In the eighteenth century, too, people travelled—in fact travelling was an essential element in the education of everyone who could afford it. Every English nobleman made the Grand Tour. And the world was still so passing strange, so unknown to the stay-at-homes, that these travellers found it worth while to write books about their experiences. Ignorance was not limited to lands beyond the European confines; in fact, it was concentrated rather on Europe itself. In the eighteenth century the different nations of Europe set about getting to know each other, and they arrived at the surprising discovery—surprising especially to the French—that their neighbours were not very different from themselves. This was the consequence of a great upheaval in France which set a cosmopolitan stamp upon the century—I mean the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, whereby the flower of the French intellect was scattered abroad. These men turned to their pens for a livelihood, and wrote books about the foreign lands to which they had travelled, and in which they had made their new homes.

And of all the discoveries which the spirit of travel made for the eighteenth century, none was more significant than the discovery of England. If in the seventeenth century travel meant for the world's literature the discovery of the Orient: in the eighteenth it meant the discovery of England. I hope that one day someone will write a big and adequate book about foreign travellers in England at that time; I think it

would be fundamental for our understanding of the evolution of eighteenth-century European literature. The number of travellers from the Continent who visited us and wrote their impressions of us was enormous. For one little decade—1773-83—I have counted a dozen books about us of the first importance by Frenchmen, Germans and Spaniards. And these books are valuable even to us ; they tell us more about ourselves than our own writers do. For the foreigner saw and noted things which were mere commonplaces to the stay-at-home. They are no longer commonplace to-day, and we would give a great deal to have a faithful record. The most vivid picture I know of the London of 170 years ago is to be found in the travels of a German lady novelist of some note—Sophie von La Roche—a book oddly unfamiliar to us. The foreigner noted our strange customs, usually with admiration ; for England was regarded by all travellers in that age as the pre-eminent leader in civilization and culture, and above all in government.

The consequence of these travels was not merely the discovery of English civilization in a literal sense, but the discovery of English literature and of English life as a factor in imaginative literature. There is a deeply marked English vein in all the literature of the continent in the eighteenth century. The scene of novels and plays was transferred to England and peopled with English men and women, who comported themselves—especially in that peculiar quality which the continental nations believed themselves to have discovered about us, and which they called “spleen”—in accordance with the records of these travellers.

Of the many other English reflections in continental literature of the eighteenth century I cannot take time to speak—of the work for instance of Prévost, who brought Richardson’s books to France. (And how many heroines of continental novels bear the name Fanny, which seemed particularly to fascinate our foreign visitors !)

Then a little later, another discovery was made by the more adventurous travellers to these islands—the discovery of Scotland, and the enchanted world of mists and spirits which Macpherson had extracted from Gaelic poetry in his *Poems of Ossian*. The things that struck our visitors were indeed various: the bustle of London; the cliffs of Dover; our model inns; our splendid roads and stage coaches.

Still another discovery which the traveller within the frontiers of Europe made in the eighteenth century was that of Italy—its mellow beauty, its colour, and its great memories of the past. Indeed for the north of Europe this was a discovery only second in importance to that of England. The Italian journey became for the Germans and Scandinavians a great critical experience of their lives, and often—as in the case of Goethe—put an indelible stamp upon their creative work. The mountains of Wales, the Lake country and Scotland, however, thanks to the glamour created by the *Poems of Ossian*, seemed to impress travellers more than the Swiss Alps. Thus the eighteenth century made the important discovery that mountains were not merely objectionable barriers to travel, but objects of sublime beauty in themselves. Before this happened, the human eye had delighted only in the fertile plains, and had turned away from jagged peaks as objects of horror; now these peaks were seen in their glory—and here we English were the pioneers, and foreign travellers to these shores learned the lesson from us.

People went on travelling of course in the nineteenth century—travelled indeed as they had never travelled before; but the novelty had worn off. Their experiences were no longer able to create a literary thrill, and in consequence they had less value for imaginative literature. The *milieu* itself fell into the background, and became only a foil to personal experience and impressions, as, for instance, in *Childe Harold*. Another reason for the lessening reflection

of travel was the rise of Romanticism, which stimulated the interest of men in their own hearts and minds, and in the poetic virtues of the past of their own peoples, and thus led them to seek their inspiration nearer home. As far as literature is concerned, the nations of Europe knew less about each other—and cared less—in the nineteenth century than in the spacious, cosmopolitan eighteenth century.

But if England had been discovered—was already a turned page—America still remained. And we all know what a reverberation the red man of the western hemisphere had in France, down to the enthusiasm for Fenimore Cooper and *The Last of the Mohicans*. America was greeted as the land of freedom by those men to whom the great Revolution was still a living memory: although many, alas, who actually crossed the ocean, experienced like Martin Chuzzlewit a sad disappointment when they found how unfree and how crude the land of freedom was. Still, America looms very large in the literature of the nineteenth century—a kind of Eldorado of great dreams of liberty and open spaces.

Let me turn now to another aspect of my theme. In its very essence, literature, especially that form of literature which rests on narrative, is an expression of travel. The oldest stories of the world are stories of travel—the *Odyssey*, the *Aeneid*, the Italian epics, the novels of the seventeenth century, are all travel novels. It is true that, in spite of the slowly growing realism which I have already noted, it was for the most part an exotic and untrue record of travel. But at the beginning of the eighteenth century one great book changed all this. Suddenly, into the fantastic, extravagant world, dropped *Robinson Crusoe*. Before this simple and realistic description of a single shipwrecked mariner fighting single-handed the forces of nature, the whole motley world of the heroic novel, with its record of adventures from China to Peru, faded into thin air. And a new era of travel-inspired

literature began. The effect of *Robinson Crusoe* on the Continent was enormous ; in Germany especially it provoked an entire literature of *Robinsonaden*, all discarding the imaginative appurtenances of the older novel. From now on a conscious striving after truth crept into the travel aspect of imaginative literature. Of course, we have still markedly extravagant and fantastic travel books like Gulliver's journeyings, like Niels Klim's visit to the underworld, and many another ; but such fantasies were usually written with satiric intent, and in any case, however unreal (I think especially of Gulliver), were all depicted with a realism expressly calculated to illude.

There is still a further aspect of the travel idea in literature. I have just said that all narrative literature is at bottom a record of travel. The older novels are frequently quite frankly described as *Adventures*, *Aventures*, *Abenteuer*—strange and unexpected records of things experienced by the hero on his way through the world. But, again in the eighteenth century, a new type of novel was invented by the London printer Samuel Richardson, who eschewed this element in his work : the so-called family novel came into being—a record of everyday happenings in the relation of men and women to one another. But the influence of Richardson did not altogether obliterate the travel element ; and for long afterwards we find the century dominated by a new type of novel, which combined the record of psychological experience with the older element of progressive movement and development. On the other hand, books of travel took on the aspects of the new Richardsonian novel ; and that genre arose which the eighteenth century called the “ Sentimental Journey ”, after Laurence Sterne's work, which was published in 1768 and became the model for an enormous literature of travel in every country of Europe. In fact from now on, everyone travelled sentimentally—by which of course I do not mean (any more than Sterne meant) sentimentally in the modern

sense. The experiences of men and things by the way were accompanied by reflection, moralizing, and irrelevant anecdote: this is all that is meant by "sentimental".

If, then, with the wearing off of novelty, in books about exotic things, a waning of interest had set in, this was amply made up for by the new sentimental literature of travel, which continued to live a robust and virile life down to its last great monument in European literature, the *Reisebilder* of Heinrich Heine. Again, as you see, the centre of gravity was changed. Sentiment took the place of the old exoticism and extravagance. First, the world had viewed with open-mouthed wonder the description and story of the unknown: now the unknown had become familiar, and interest had shifted to the reflection of things in the mind of the observant traveller. And out of these new developments evolved a type of imaginative literature which none the less may be traced back to its original source. The old naïve travel novel of the Middle Ages—the novel of adventure—had developed not only into the sentimental journey, but also into the satiric journey. The awaking consciousness of the middle and lower classes had turned against the novel of aristocratic adventurers and parodied it. Thus had arisen the great picaresque novel of Spain, and the immortal *Don Quixote*. And the picaresque novel, as you know, found in England a warm reception, and coloured all our greatest eighteenth-century fiction. The novels of Smollett are essentially picaresque novels—so too is *Tom Jones*. The picaresque travel-novel is the reverse of the serious epic of travel. The traveller is no longer a hero, but a rogue; his adventures are not filled with the spirit of noble endeavours and high emprise, but are usually mean and despicable. The picaresque novel is a satire on the serious novel. But it is far from being on that account a thing of evil, to be despised. It introduced a new and valuable element into literature—

realism ; the picaresque hero, unlike his high-born analogue, comes consistently into close contact with realities—the less poetic the better : the crude adventures of the highway, the gossip of the stage coach, the bustle and life of the country inn. He draws far more largely on the resources of the actual traveller's records than the hero who eschews the rabble, and moves only amidst an idealized aristocratic society dwelling in great and isolated castles. We have a far more vivid picture of the Spain that Don Quixote travelled than of the land that Amadis visited ; and how living is the England through which our own great picaresque hero Tom Jones travels !

Thus the travel element developed in two directions : sentimental and satiric. But from Richardson on, the new novel became still another thing : psychological. It occupied itself pre-eminently with the minds and souls of the people it described. The old novel of outward progress and movement became subordinated to the new novel of spiritual processes and experiences. The interesting thing is, however, that we still do not get very far from the fundamental basis of imaginative narrative as essentially a record of travel. But whereas the old heroes travelled in the body, the new heroes travelled in the spirit. The two aspects are to be seen side by side all through the eighteenth century. The great novels of that age, whether English, French or German, are, when reduced to their ultimate elements, travel books. They all contain two kinds of travel—actual movement from place to place in the literal sense, and travel through the realm of experience. And into all this something else entered, hitherto lacking in narrative literature : the element of growth, of enrichment by experience of the world, by contact and conflict with it, either in the flesh or in the spirit of adventure. The old heroes for the most part left off where they had begun. In spite of all they went through, they remained the same. They rarely grew wiser, for the hero of the early stamp was born fully

panoplied with wisdom ; they did not learn, for they did not need to learn ; their experiences of life did not add to their spiritual stature—they are static figures. At most, travel added to their knowledge ; it rarely added to their wisdom. Now, largely through the initiative of Richardson, and the enthusiasm of the eighteenth century for education, a new factor enters into the novel : the development of character. Psychological development, which thanks to the influence of the ancients had always been present in the outstanding dramas of the world, now became a part of the record of adventure in prose fiction.

Thus the novels of Europe in the eighteenth century from—shall we say *Robinson Crusoe* to Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*?—are at bottom all travel books in this two-fold sense : they make ample use of physical travel, and they also are travels in the domain of the spirit. The new hero travels through life, through experience ; he garners knowledge and wisdom by the way ; and he emerges from it all at the end, not necessarily better—often it may be worse—but in any case different. *Tom Jones* has distinctly this two-fold character ; the same feature is present in *Wilhelm Meister* ; it persists down to Walter Scott, and later—even into our own time. The novel, in so far as the factor of experience acquired in the journey through life is concerned, becomes at the same time a depiction of the growth, the education of the soul by the value of this experience. But the old element of progressive narrative involved in travel still persists as a ground note.

LITERATURE IN THE UNIVERSITIES

WHEN, some months ago, I was invited to contribute to this series of public lectures, I proposed—a little rashly, I fear, and off-handedly—the subject the title of which stands on your invitation cards.

I had it vaguely in mind that in this, my last year of academic service, I might seize the opportunity to give some account of my stewardship—to gather together, as a teacher whose chief task it has been to deal with literature and the study of literature, the results arrived at in my work for our University, stretching back now, alas, over a period not far short of thirty years.

But when, the other day, I sat down to consider what I might say to you this afternoon, the enormity and enormity of what I had rashly undertaken to do was borne in upon me. The title I had chosen not merely prompted to discussion of all manner of big questions, but insisted that they should be discussed. So many vistas opened up that, in the end, the idea of talking about what I myself had done or failed to do, shrank, fortunately, to more modest proportions.

The very vagueness of my title, instead of allowing me a convenient latitude, seemed to impose upon me the necessity of coming to grips with large and fundamental problems. What, for instance, really is the province of the study of literature in our universities? What has been its historical evolution? What may it become? What have been its form and scope in the past—what may they be in the future? Whither are

we tending? A brief hour's talk can only allow me to touch on the merest fringe of a subject so vast in its implications.

The academic study of literature, when we come to scrutinize it closely, is—let us be clear about this at once—a different thing in many ways from that of an exact science or province of knowledge, like mathematics or chemistry. For those of my colleagues whose business it is to deal with such subjects, the path is more or less clearly marked out. They have to instil into young minds concrete knowledge, or knowledge of facts, to co-ordinate theory with fact, to discuss and illustrate the practical applications of such knowledge. They deal with provinces of learning with which there is no difficulty in coming to grips. The object of the student of mathematics is to become a mathematician: of the student of chemistry to become a chemist—in some measure at least; perhaps even the object of a student of history is to become potentially a historian. But what of the student of literature? His goal is certainly not to become a maker of literature, although it is pleasant to think that that may be, and sometimes is, a by-product. Is it our function as professors of literature to turn out literary historians and literary critics? Again, if you come to think of it, that cannot be a purpose which concerns very many of the young people under our care. Thus, you see our field is by no means easy to define.

Even my more immediate colleagues whose province is language—philology, as we like to call it in England—are to be envied. They, too, have a subject which can be more or less definitely mapped out, one into which—if I may mix my metaphors—the student can get his teeth. There is nothing vague about it. And I have long come to the conclusion that the English mind—in contrast notably to the German mind, with which I have necessarily the closest familiarity, perhaps even to my own

Scottish type of mind with its disturbing admixture of the Celt—has a definite inclination and talent for the forms of study into which, as I have said, it can get its teeth. We do not, here in England, take kindly to the elusive vagueness of aesthetics and metaphysics.

Looking back on the work of our German department in the University of London, and more particularly in this College and at University College, I have regretfully to admit that the ablest students have for the most part gravitated to concrete philological and mediaeval studies; the number of those who have passed through my hands and have shown distinguished aptitude for the study of modern literature could be counted on my fingers. Possibly the fault has been mine; but not, I think, entirely.

The study of literature, then, as literature, is a thing apart, a thing difficult to define precisely: and one, moreover, which demands quite particular presuppositions, tastes and talent—presuppositions which fit in only indifferently with what is regarded as “academic” in the traditional sense of that word. It is true that every branch of study requires a special aptitude; but that for literature is of a very distinct kind.

If you will look back into the past, you will find that this study of literature has always been treated in a stepmotherly fashion by the Universities of Europe. Until quite modern times, it was only tolerated; it was even frowned upon—in any case very grudgingly admitted to a modest and dubious place in academic curricula. It had no place at all in the mediaeval university; the students who pilgrimaged to the great university of Paris, in the dark ages of European culture, did not go there to study literature as we understand it to-day. It had no place in the *trivium* and *quadrivium* of the Middle Ages. The *trivium* was concerned primarily with the art of grammar and of rhetoric: but not with poetry.

Students may then have exercised their minds on how to discourse persuasively, or on the art of eloquence, may have dogmatized on the propriety of words and similes, on forms of speech and verse: but that is only the technique of literature, the merest skeleton, the dry bones of what we now understand by literary study.

With literature as a product of the creative imagination the mediaeval university would have nothing to do. The imagination, as an undisciplined and undisciplinable thing—a dangerous and upsetting enemy to clear logical thinking—was *tabu* in the universities of the old world. I say the imagination; but until that great 'Thirty Years' War of European controversy, the *Querelle des anciens et des modernes* at the end of the seventeenth century, nobody really knew what the imagination was at all.

It is true that back in antiquity a very modern minded thinker, Quintilian (who might to-day be more profitably studied than he is) had caught a glimpse of this strange, mystic faculty. In his *Institutes* are flashes of insight about the imagination fraught with deep import; but they passed unnoticed or misunderstood. The whole purpose of every *Ars poetica* of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, down to the eighteenth century, was not to understand or promote the use of the imagination, but to fetter it, to banish it, or at least to keep it severely in its place as the potential enemy of human reason, and, where the writing of poetry was concerned, as something that could only upset the equilibrium of that "buon gusto", good taste, of the right-thinking man.

When these older generations thought about literature, it was only to regard it as a practical application of logical thinking. Not until the beginning of the eighteenth century did it dawn on the world that the supreme governing force—the essential factor in poetry—was not the reason at all, but just

this maligned imagination. Then, and then only, with the dethronement of a logic-bound reason, could the study of literature, as we know it to-day, begin to take shape.

Some of us are old enough to remember how obstinately and bitterly the intrusion of English literature was opposed in our own universities. In some—in Scotland—it was grudgingly tacked on to the chair of rhetoric: I think they have still in my old university a “Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature”. Or again, it only gained a footing on the tacit assurance that it would decorously restrict itself to English philology, reserve its attention for Anglo-Saxon and Middle English. Its intrusion in a form which might have foreshadowed modern developments was perhaps felt to be a challenge to the supremacy of Latin and Greek; for in the ancients alone, so our forefathers believed, was vested the proud function of instilling “humanity” and “humanities” into the modern mind. How far, however,—or how little—the study of the ancients, as it was practised down to the eighteenth century, is to be reconciled with our modern conception of the humanities, is another question into which I cannot enter to-day. The fact remains that the subject of literature, as we understand it, was a very late-comer in academic education.

We must not, however, scout this attitude of the old universities as mere narrow-mindedness and obscurantism. We must not think that modern literature was kept out merely because the Professors of Latin and Greek, Rhetoric and Logic, had vested interests which they feared might be entrenched upon. If we will be fair to our ancestors, we must admit that they had indeed some reason for the exclusion of literature (in our sense) from what they considered the proper province of a university. The study of literature is largely concerned with the appreciation and criticism of poetic qualities—

qualities dependent on the exercise, not of the reason, but of the imagination. We do not and cannot restrict ourselves in our study to pure fact-knowledge. Now this imagination, whether creatively in the poet, or interpretatively in the critic, is a function which it is difficult to bring into line with the traditional conception of academic purpose, whose sphere is the understanding and the reason. Our study of literature can only partially be established on the solid foundation of fact and exact fact-knowledge. Its teachings are very largely matters of individual subjective judgment, of personal opinion.

We are all too familiar with the changing horizons of critical appreciation. It is disheartening to those of us concerned with literary study to see how opinion changes. We quote the judgments of great critics of the past, in many cases only to show that these judgments are no longer ours. In fact, every new generation comes with a fresh outlook on the poetry of the past. Opinion, taste in literature is a fluid, evanescent thing. If there is substance in Ibsen's claim that every truth has but a limited life and currency, how much truer is this of every aesthetic judgment!

I read only the other day a criticism of the recent cheap re-issue of the great *Cambridge History of English Literature*, which is after all not by any means an old work. The reviewer gave it as his opinion—rather exaggeratedly, no doubt—that many of the chapters were already, as criticism, out of date; they no longer expressed the outlook of 1932 and needed fundamental revision: and that the publishers were ill-advised in relegating to a volume not yet published, the most valuable constituent of the original work—its bibliographies. These at least were compilations of facts which could not, as far as they went, be shaken.

And I am sure every one of us who has thought about literary values feels a certain humiliation in

looking back on his own inconstancy. I know that I, for one, should not like to see reprinted my own critical effusions at the turn of the century, when all of us who were then young (or youngish) and optimistic, saw, in the great wave of realism which had swept over European letters, the panacea for all ills. We indulged in an absurd over-valuation of a movement which, in these past thirty years, has quietly sunk back into a very modest niche in literary history.

Now, this fluidity of aesthetic opinion is a real justification for the unwillingness of the universities of the past to admit literature into their system—a branch of study which is obviously so unstable in its positive values. This, they said, is not the kind of established knowledge which it has always been the proud function of academic work to cultivate and widen; it is merely empty talk about individual opinion. And it is not surprising that, once the admission of literary studies to the universities was unavoidable, these institutions should have set about the problem of establishing these branches of learning, not on the shifting sands of subjective opinion and criticism, but on the solid rock of fact.

This craving for a fact basis really underlay the expatiations on technical form, on rhetorical modes of expression, the accumulation of dates and data to the rigid exclusion of aesthetic appreciation, which made up the study of literature in the mediaeval universities.

And it also lies behind the effort of the modern universities to base literary study on a philological groundwork. The process is nowhere more clearly seen than in the universities of Germany during the past hundred years. They have grappled, as no others have grappled, with the problem of how to give the study of literature something of the certainty and permanency of a science.

For myself, I regard myself happy in my German student years—when I was already vaguely uneasy

over the clash of critical opinion, and very conscious of the crudities of my own juvenile ideas—in having there been introduced to an approach to literary study which to one who like myself had, as an undergraduate, passed from science to arts, was very gratifying and satisfying.

We were taught to see in literature the materials of a science—and in the larger sense a biological science, a science of organic growth. A nation's literature assumed, like its history, the form of an evolutionary process, was regarded as a living thing that passed from babyhood to maturity and from maturity to decay and death—no, not death, for in the organism of literature there is no death, only a passing from one phase to another, a transition to a new life. The aesthetic valuation of individual poets in my German student days took a quite subordinate place.

And as the modern historian no longer, like his eighteenth-century predecessor, adapts world happenings to his own pre-conceived idea of the ways of God to man: but tries faithfully and loyally, on the basis of laborious searchings in archives, to present the past as it really was, so I learned to approach literature in a similar spirit. The first business of the literary student, we were taught, was with incontrovertible facts, with the sifting of records, the establishment of accurate bibliographical data—with the genesis, expressed in terms of fact, of the individual works of literary art: the relations in which they stood to the poet's life and experience. And from this we advanced cautiously forward to questions of sources, of influences, of the modifying effects of *milieu* and social conditions: to the reflection in poetry of the nation's ideas, hopes and aspirations. We studied the conditions of literary growth, whereby a nation's poetry rose in certain epochs to glittering brilliance; we tried to understand what factors were responsible for its decay. And at every step our judgment was trained to weigh evidence, to form

conclusions unaffected by personal prejudices, by likes and dislikes. We were taught the primal necessity of accurate texts, and introduced to the methods of establishing them.

This was obviously a very different thing from the pretty-pretty lectures on the beauties of the poets which was all the instruction in literature classes had meant for me in those early days. There, the beginning and the end were chiefly aesthetic estimates, spiced with ingenious aperçus. The new approach may have been duller: but one felt at least that there was something solid about it, something into which—to repeat my metaphor—one could get one's teeth.

Such then has been the attempt of the modern universities to provide the study of literature with a scientific foundation, in harmony with what has always been the academic approach to knowledge. The principles of literary research, which had been established in Germany a century ago and more, were reinforced in the course of the nineteenth century by new developments in France, which brought its clear logical mind to bear on this building up of literary study on fact; while Italy's contribution in reducing the science of aesthetics to system and precision has proved of the first importance.

Nor have we in this country been behindhand, even if we have always shown a disinclination to commit ourselves to excessive systematization.

In recent years, the development (again in France) of a branch of literary science which was originally formulated, in respect of primitive literature, in England, and which the French have designated, not too happily, *la littérature comparée*, has opened up fresh avenues and introduced order into a form of criticism which in early days had been peculiarly futile. And in the more immediate past, the new science of psychology, by its study of mental processes and the workings of the imagination, has indicated

lines of investigation which cannot but be of the first importance for the future.

The purpose then, tacit or avowed, of all these developments in the academic study of literature has been to endow that study with something of the qualities of a science. I have laid weight on these developments—as who does not?—because they do, in the end, prepare the way for enduring judgments on the creations of the poetic imagination. They exclude, or help to exclude, the merely capricious and subjective in such judgments; they lead to the formation of opinion which will not be merely that of a passing age, but can lay claim to some degree of permanence. And, if I may be personal, I look back on the seminar for training in the methods of literary research which, for many years, it has been my privilege to hold at University College, as one of the most satisfying sides of my work for our University. These seminars have often been attended by students in other fields than that of German, and by young men and women from the Continent, especially from Switzerland and Germany, who have brought with them inestimable freshness of outlook and new methods of approach. And might I add: for every field of research—be it in any of the great literatures—London, with our great and splendidly organized British Museum, is the best place in the world. Here in London we need not in our seminars—as is so often the case in other less fortunately placed universities—merely play at research as a course of training. We can actually help in extending the confines of knowledge. And twenty-seven years ago I was instrumental in founding our *Modern Language Review*, so that the workers in our university might possess a channel through which to give the results of their research to the world.

But let me not paint to you these developments in too bright colours. There is a dark side to the reduction of literary study to an exact science, in that

this reduction becomes too often the be-all and end-all. A goal beyond is often lost sight of. This is only too apparent in some of the work turned out from the German universities: sesquipedalian treatises, mechanical compilations of data, often a futilely mis-directed hunting for sources: above all, disregard for the ultimate and eternal values of poetry, lack of reverence for the mysterious, God-given gift of inspiration. Still more has this weakness shown itself in the universities of America, where German methods were indiscriminately imported and easy laurels won by the imitation of them. These things have too often reduced the word "dissertation" to a byword, as a mere academic exercise for a degree, a vehicle of—it may be new but—undigested facts. How many pieces of research fall into oblivion (save among those engaged on similar work) because the authors have not had the patience or been adequately trained to look beyond their ant-like accumulation of facts and data, to draw conclusions which alone can give their labours value—or because they have not had the ability to clothe their research in an acceptable literary form! There was, for a time, a danger that we might take over too readily into our academic system the paraphernalia of the German dissertation, with its pedantic meticulousness and its lack of literary distinction in execution. We, and still more our American cousins, were sometimes apt to forget that what might be good for the Germans was not necessarily good for us. Now it is surely for us Anglo-Saxons to evolve—as the French universities have done for their people—a type of academic thesis which shall meet the needs of our intellectual temperament, and which must necessarily be different from either the French or the German type of dissertation. I do think that we in London have led the way in this direction; in recent years there have been theses produced in our modern languages departments, including of course English

(I am not competent to speak of other than literary departments, although in them doubtless the same phenomenon is to be observed) dissertations which, if they may occasionally have encountered the frowns of conservative external examiners, who pin their faith to the German type, with its smothering blanket of footnotes and its endless bibliographies, have pointed out the way to the kind of work that we are best fitted to produce. In any case, dissertations have been produced in all our schools which have at least appealed to an English publisher—to whom the very word “dissertation” is usually anathema—as books which he felt it an honour to give to the world.

I ought perhaps to add that in recent years, since my student days, a change has come over German academic aims and methods. The pendulum has swung from fact to speculation. But to my mind this has hardly been a change for the better. It has certainly not resulted in a type of dissertation which could serve as a model. It has not been an aid to aesthetic appreciation, but has led rather to an orgy of metaphysics.

In all that I have been saying you may think I hold too lightly what I have described as the ultimate goal of literary study—the formation of the critical judgment: or that I have lost sight of the great function of our universities, which is to *educate*. You may think, too, that I have had too exclusively in view the training of the literary specialist, the future literary historian and critic: and too little the needs of the vast majority of our students. We *do*, in this country, lay more stress on this function than in Germany, where the conception of academic activity is too often obsessed by the function of widening and advancing knowledge. We think less of adding brick to brick in the building of the temple of knowledge than of trying to purify and ennoble the minds of the younger generation, by teaching them to hold right communion with the great minds of our race.

Now nowhere is this duty—the education of taste and judgment—not in the old mechanical sense of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but as an inner conviction and a spiritual experience—more emphatically imposed upon us than in the province of literature.

I must however frankly admit that it is just here that I have experienced the greatest difficulties and disappointments—in this throwing of the bridge from the scientific study of literature to the moulding of the taste of the student.

I have had young workers who carried out their tasks for me with enthusiasm and conspicuous ability; but who yet have lacked the ability or the temperament to co-ordinate their intellectual power with the formation of a taste of their own. I remember in particular a young man of quite exceptional talent, who has since attained a position of some distinction as a writer; but sometimes now-a-days, when I read his praise of foolish novels which I should not have imagined him able to read at all, I feel it as a grave slur on my share in training him. I cannot but suspect that, in his student days, when he had given me a solid and well-balanced study in the evolution of eighteenth-century fiction, he must have secretly sought solace in the novels of the late Edgar Wallace!

This ultimate education to good taste is the most difficult of our problems. And here of course we professors of foreign literatures are under serious disadvantages and limitations, compared with our colleagues in English. Students after all *do* come to the university intent on studying English literature; but the young people who elect French, Italian or German have mainly in view, as their practical goal as school teachers, the acquisition of the foreign *language*. Literature is for them but a side issue—of minor importance in comparison with the mastery of the living tongue.

I have just referred to the profession of teaching as being the main profession to which the study of a modern language and literature leads. But are there not other doors at which such students might knock? We have in recent years been asked to co-operate with the department of librarianship in the university, asked to take a share in a school of journalism. And surely an important training which it is for us to supply is that in literary criticism. I have often wondered that so few of our young people take advantage of what we are able to offer in teaching the art and method of criticism—and, on the other hand, have deplored that so much of the chat which passes for criticism in our press gives no indication that its authors have passed through any kind of academic training to this end at all. Here I do think the university could be useful.

None of us of course loses sight of the fact that a university education is very much more than mere vocational training. If that were all, we might easily leave our job to be carried out by practical commercial institutes of the Berlitz type. I, for my own part, have always insisted with my students that, though they may have memorized every date and every work of Goethe's life—whereby, of course, they may conceivably pass a brilliant examination—if they have not caught a glimpse of a new world of beauty, if their study has not opened up to them wider and fairer horizons and added to their spiritual stature, their knowledge is only so much dead and useless lumber, to be forgotten a few months after it has done service in obtaining for them academic distinction.

But our work where foreign literatures are concerned is, I often think, unduly hampered by a certain discouragement of individual judgment. The average modern language student knows too well that the safest stepping-stone to a good degree and a bread and butter occupation is the solid rock of the text-book. He knows that it will pay if he keeps

himself within its safe confines, and repeats in examination the opinion of his professors. He largely suppresses such private and personal judgments as he may have formed, shrewdly suspecting that they may bring him no credit with his examiners, and may even call down upon him the blue pencil.

In great part our examination system is to blame for this lack of freedom in educating the taste and judgment of our students to independence: but it is surely a matter of the first importance. At least I have always thought so.

I remember once a distinguished external German examiner—a German—who used to be unreasonably wrathful if his candidates dared to express opinions about Schiller at variance with orthodox German opinion. And my French colleagues could no doubt recall cases where Frenchmen have equally resented it if an English student did not see eye to eye with M. Lanson in the appreciation of great French writers. It never seemed to occur to these foreign gentlemen that an Anglo-Saxon mind—if it is honest with itself, and looks at the literatures of other peoples with its own eyes and not merely through foreign spectacles—must necessarily see them in a different light from the foreign nation. Goethe and Schiller—Corneille, Racine, Molière—if they are to have a formative influence on our national life and taste, if they are, as I have said, to add to our spiritual stature, must have other values to us than to their own people: just as to foreign peoples Shakespeare and Byron are far from identical with the Shakespeare and Byron we know at home. If we study foreign literatures, as we perform foreign operas at Covent Garden, in a foreign way, we shall no more make the study of those literatures a pillar in our cultural life than we shall ever attain a national opera. The men who in the past have poured the beneficial stream of foreign influence across England—men such as Carlyle—were not those whose knowledge of the

foreign literatures would enable them to make a great show in even our Honours examination: but men who had steeped themselves in, and seen with their own eyes, the culture and literature to which they could introduce us.

I have tried to show you that the development of a scientific method of literary study has marked a great and salutary advance, has justified and consolidated the position of literature in the academic curriculum—a position which need no longer fear challenge from the most exact of exact sciences. Such a method does not merely contain within itself the potentiality of widening and enriching our storehouse of knowledge; it also provides the right basis for achieving a juster and more lasting foundation for our judgment of the things of the spirit and the imagination—indeed, without it, such a judgment cannot be attained. But over and above all this, upon us rests the responsibility of inspiring our young people through the medium of poetry with a purer taste, and of revealing to them treasures which shall veritably be “treasures for ever”.